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GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

The English
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designed by
Tom Stuart-Smith

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Editor's letter

It is possible to plant a lot bulbs in a small garden. Dryad Nursery in North Yorkshire is a case in point. Specialising in exquisite miniature narcissi (with an early side hustle of snowdrops), this tiny, back-garden nursery grows a much-coveted list of small, choice flowers. Miniature narcissi instil the same fervour in enthusiasts as snowdrops, due in part perhaps to their intricacy and detail. Who doesn't share the miniaturist's love of small things? The perfect miniature narcissus has clear colour, graceful form and a delicacy of flower, and a single bulb can exchange hands for a several hundred pounds. There is a worldwide waiting list for the rarest bulbs.

On a site in Somerset, Avon Bulbs specialises in year-round bulbs for the flower garden. Nurserymen Alan Street and Chris Ireland-Jones grow an incredible selection of spring-flowering tulips and alliums as well as anemones, scillas and erythroniums for naturalising, and crocuses and fritillaries for early colour. Their collection has been awarded more than 30 RHS gold medals. On page 76 they highlight their favourites for early spring.

In the first of a new series of Pots of Style, Ben Preston, head gardener at York Gate garden in Leeds, shares three inspiring planting ideas for pots, combining bulbs and perennials. Planting the caramel-leafed *Corydalis temulifolia* 'Chocolate Stars', with arrow-leaved *Cyclamen hederifolium* Silver-leaved Group, used for its foliage rather than its flowers, the beautiful, sludgy, plaster-pink *Helleborus* x *nigercors* 'Emma' and early flowering *Narcissus* 'Elka' in an aged copper pot is a wonderful way to mark the end of winter and the beginning of spring.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR

EVA NEMETH

Get fresh ideas for spring containers from Ben Preston's new Pots of Style series, page 44.

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MARIANNE MAJERUS

Spring's apple blossom sets the tone for this colourful border in a Tom Stuart-Smith designed garden in Oxfordshire, page 36.

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COVER IMAGE

Narcissus 'Coo'
by Jason Ingram

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- Join us on a two-week tour of some of Japan's most exciting gardens – page 11
- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* this month – page 32

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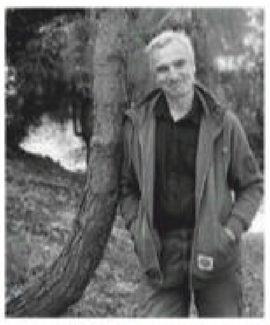

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

EVA NEMETH

Keith Wiley
Keith continues his series of monthly recommendations for plants to grow, page 24. *"As a passionate plantsman, a year-long trawl through some of my favourite plants has been a joy."*

Tilly Ware
Tilly visits a bulb-filled garden in Cambridgeshire, page 50. *"Chippenham Park has a particularly strong spirit: the ancient trees, canals, old buildings and acres of bulbs are quietly magnificent."*

Ben Preston
Head gardener Ben starts a new series on container planting, page 44. *"Playing with interesting plants and clever combinations brings creativity to the garden – with pots for every season."*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

Anna Pavord
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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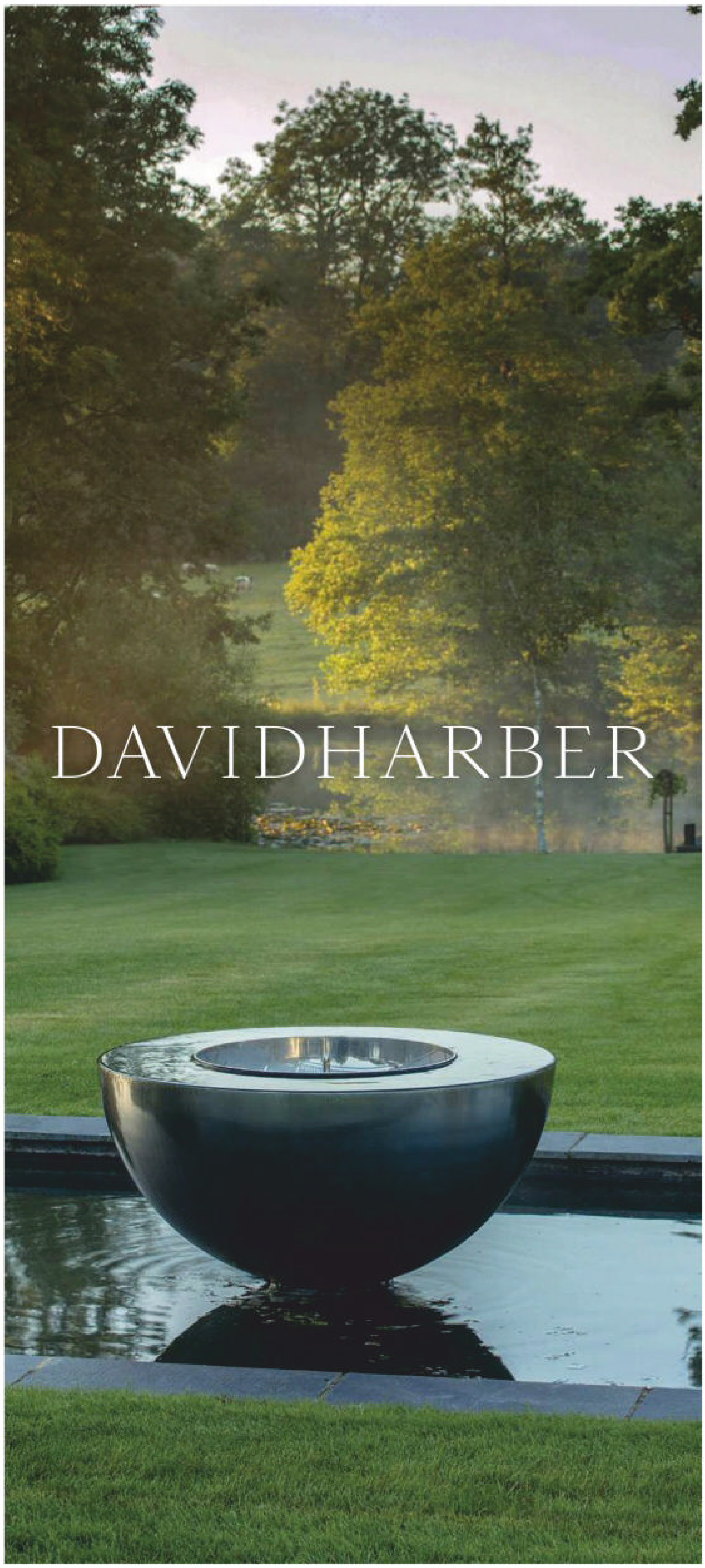

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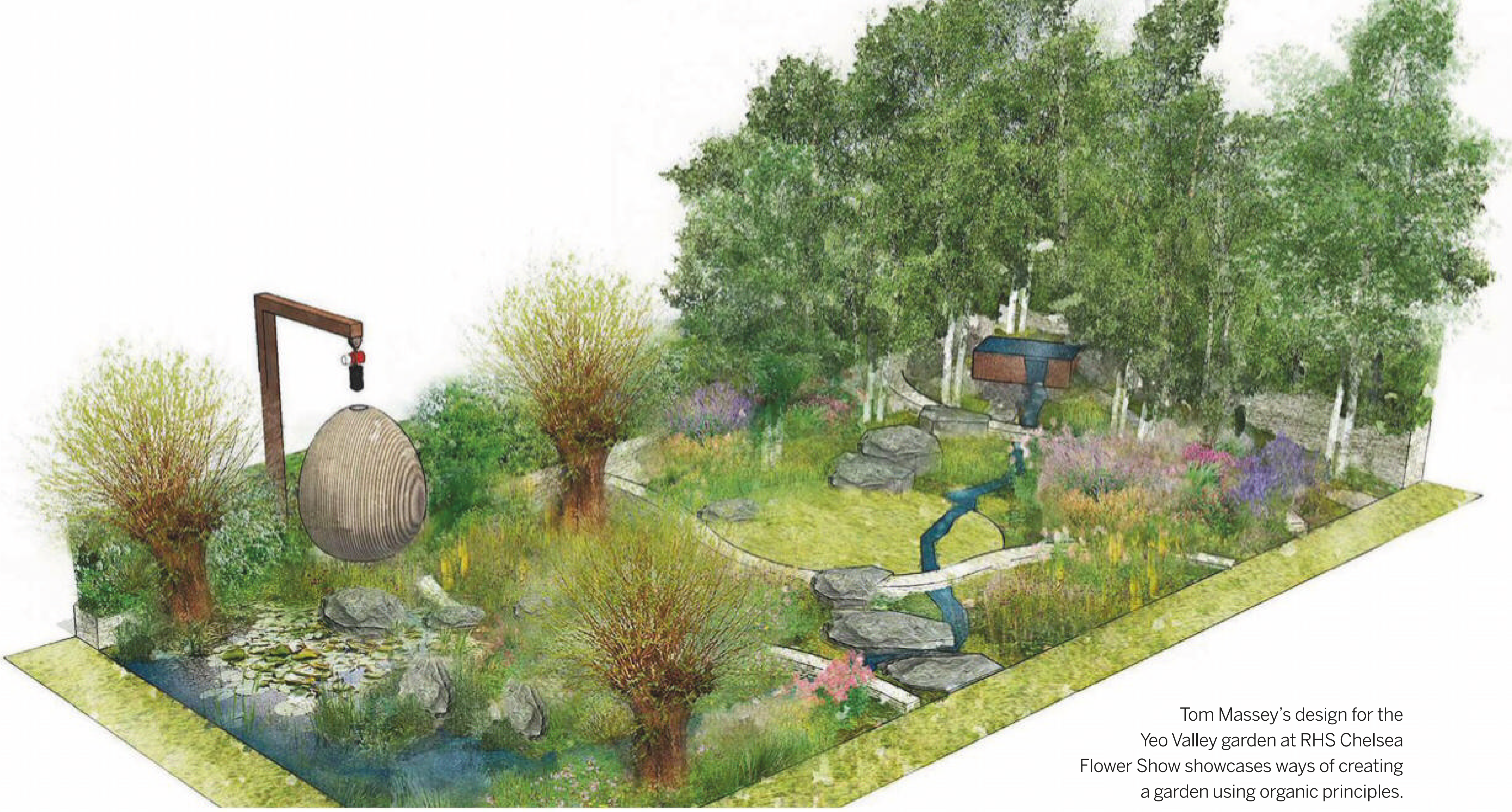

Tom Massey's design for the Yeo Valley garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show showcases ways of creating a garden using organic principles.

FRIDAY 24 APRIL 2020

HORTUS LOCI CHELSEA PLANT & GARDEN PREVIEW

Join our reader day to learn about the ground-breaking organic garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show with designer Tom Massey

GUEST SPEAKER

Tom Massey has already had show garden success with award-winning designs at Hampton Court Palace, Chelsea and the Singapore Garden Festival. His gardens stand out for their skilled combination of hard and soft landscaping.

This year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show will look to promote a much more sustainable approach to gardens with every show garden taking into consideration the way that plants and materials have been sourced, grown and used. It is also the first year that there will be a garden completely founded on organic principles. Designed by Tom Massey for organic dairy company Yeo Valley, with plants grown by Hortus Loci and advice from the Soil Association, the garden will bring together a tapestry of plants with the aim of encouraging wildlife and supporting pollinators.

Our reader day held at Hortus Loci nursery, will reveal how all of Tom's plants are being grown to strict organic specifications. On your visit to the nursery, you'll get a sneak peek of all the Chelsea-bound plants just before they head up to the showground, hear from **Tom Massey** about his design and the challenges involved in putting the garden together, as well as hearing from **Andi Strachan** and **Sarah Mead** from Yeo Valley about how the principles from their organic garden in Somerset have been translated to a show garden. **PLUS** you'll gain lots of advice on how to garden more sustainably and organically yourself. Your day includes a delicious lunch and time to browse the nursery and make your own plant selections with a special £5 discount.

EVENT DETAILS

Price £85 per person*, including lunch and refreshments.

Date Friday 24 April, 2020.
Venue The Plant Centre, Hortus Loci, Hound Green, Hook, Hampshire RG27 8LQ.

Programme
10am Arrival, coffee and cake.
10.30am Guided tour of the nursery and the Chelsea plant stock beds.
12 noon Lunch provided by on-site Hobo.co artisan café and kitchen.
1.30pm Tom Massey, Sarah Mead and Andi Strachan talk about the Yeo Valley Organic Garden at Chelsea.

For the rest of the afternoon you are free to explore the nursery and buy plants with your special £5 discount voucher. You can also sign up on the day for a loyalty card entitling you to a 10 per cent discount for further purchases at The Plant Centre Hortus Loci.

Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Booking is essential. Please advise us of any dietary or accessibility requirements.

TO BOOK

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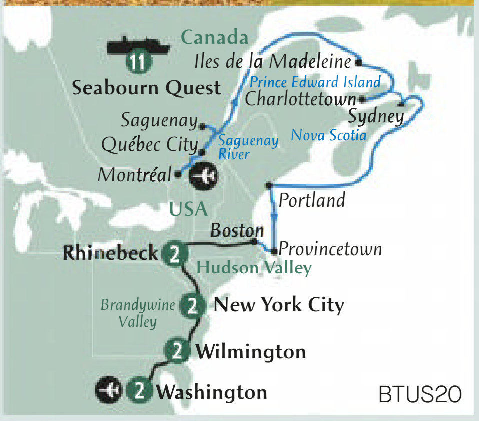
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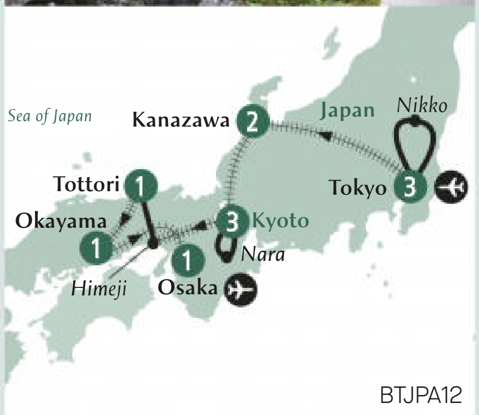
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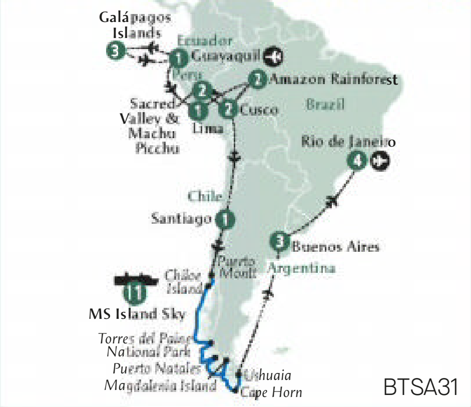
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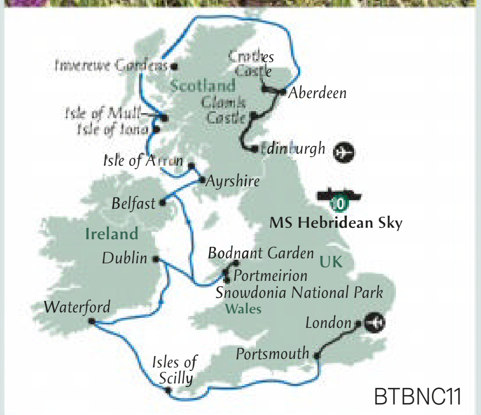
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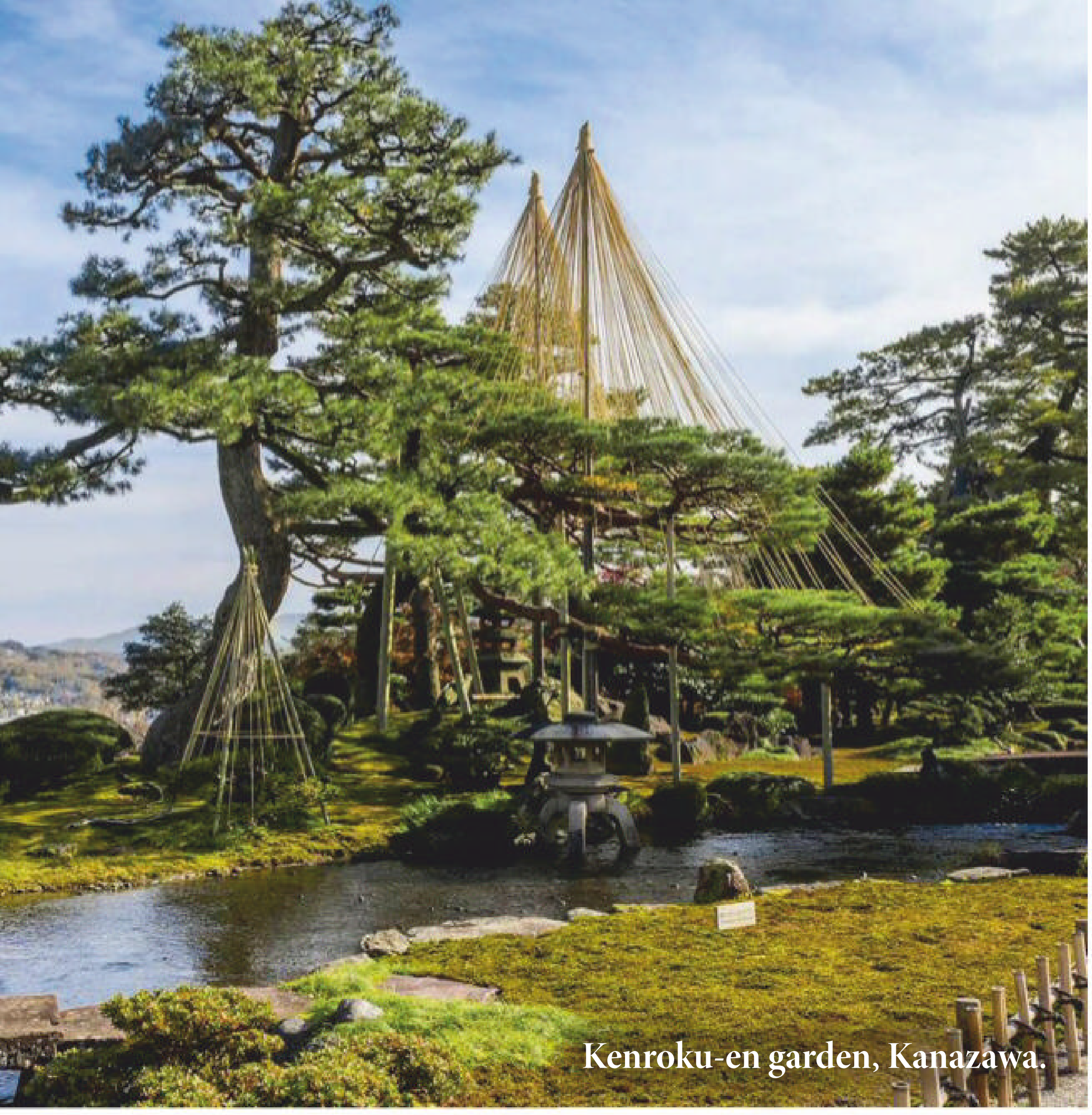
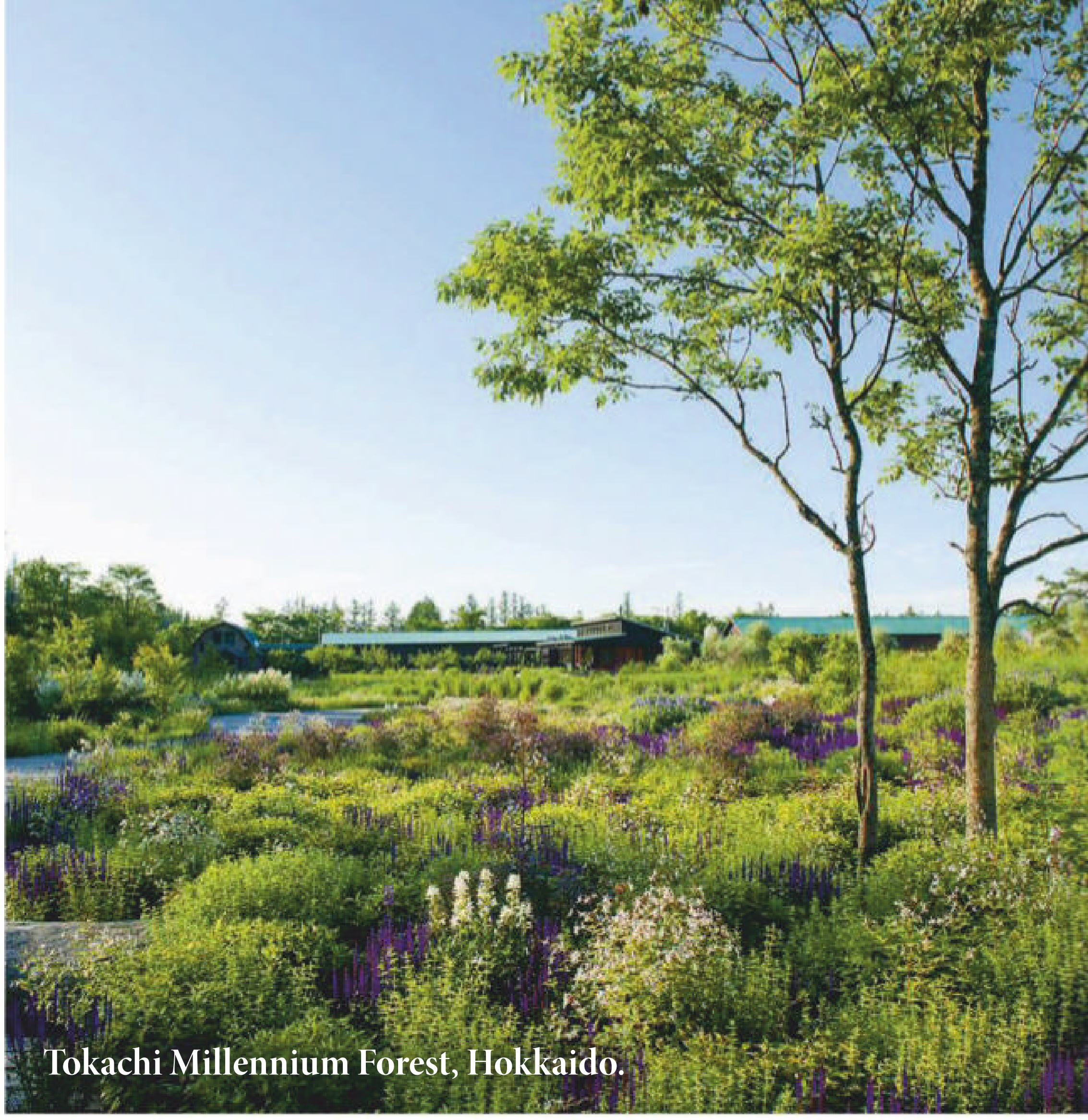

Kenroku-en garden, Kanazawa.


Tokachi Millennium Forest, Hokkaido.

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JAPAN'S HIDDEN GARDEN GEMS

Travel with Japanese garden expert Hannah Gardner on this far-reaching, two-week itinerary and discover some of Japan's most compelling gardens

TOUR LEADER

Hannah Gardner Kew trained horticulturist, Hannah works as a head gardener and garden consultant with a particular passion for studying plant communities worldwide – including time spent in Japan. She writes The Outsider column for *Gardens Illustrated*.

JOAQUIN OSSORIO-CASTILLO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; SHOGO OIZUMI.

The tour starts with a visit to the internationally celebrated contemporary gardens of **Tokachi Millennium Forest,** designed by Dan Pearson and situated on Japan's most northerly island, Hokkaido. You'll learn about the spirit of nature and sense of place from head gardener and international speaker Midori Shintani, as well as enjoying a cultural workshop and foraged forest lunch prepared by the gardeners. Returning to the mainland you will delve into the traditional gardens, culture and the unforgettable architecture of Tokyo, Kanazawa, Kyoto and Nara, where gardens will provoke thought and delight in equal measure. Meet with the gardeners of the **Chion-in Temple** who will demonstrate the fine art of *niwaki* pruning and offer advice on the tools they use. Discover both renowned gardens and lesser-known, hidden cultural gems, such as the beautifully preserved historic **Sumiya Pleasure House** in Kyoto. The varied landscapes visited meld the intimate essence of nature with the disciplines of cosmology, poetry and meditation and through Hannah's formal and informal instruction, your journey will unpick the complexity and seek to understand the history and meaning of these serene and spiritual landscapes.

BOOKING DETAILS

Price per person, based on two people sharing is £6,280 (a single supplement of £1,140 is levied by the hotels).

Price is based on all hotels, trains, other transportation, most meals and all sightseeing. It does not include hotel extras or travel insurance, or international flights, although these can be arranged through Distant Horizons if required. For more details and for an in-depth itinerary with details of day-to-day visits, meals, etc, please contact Distant Horizons.

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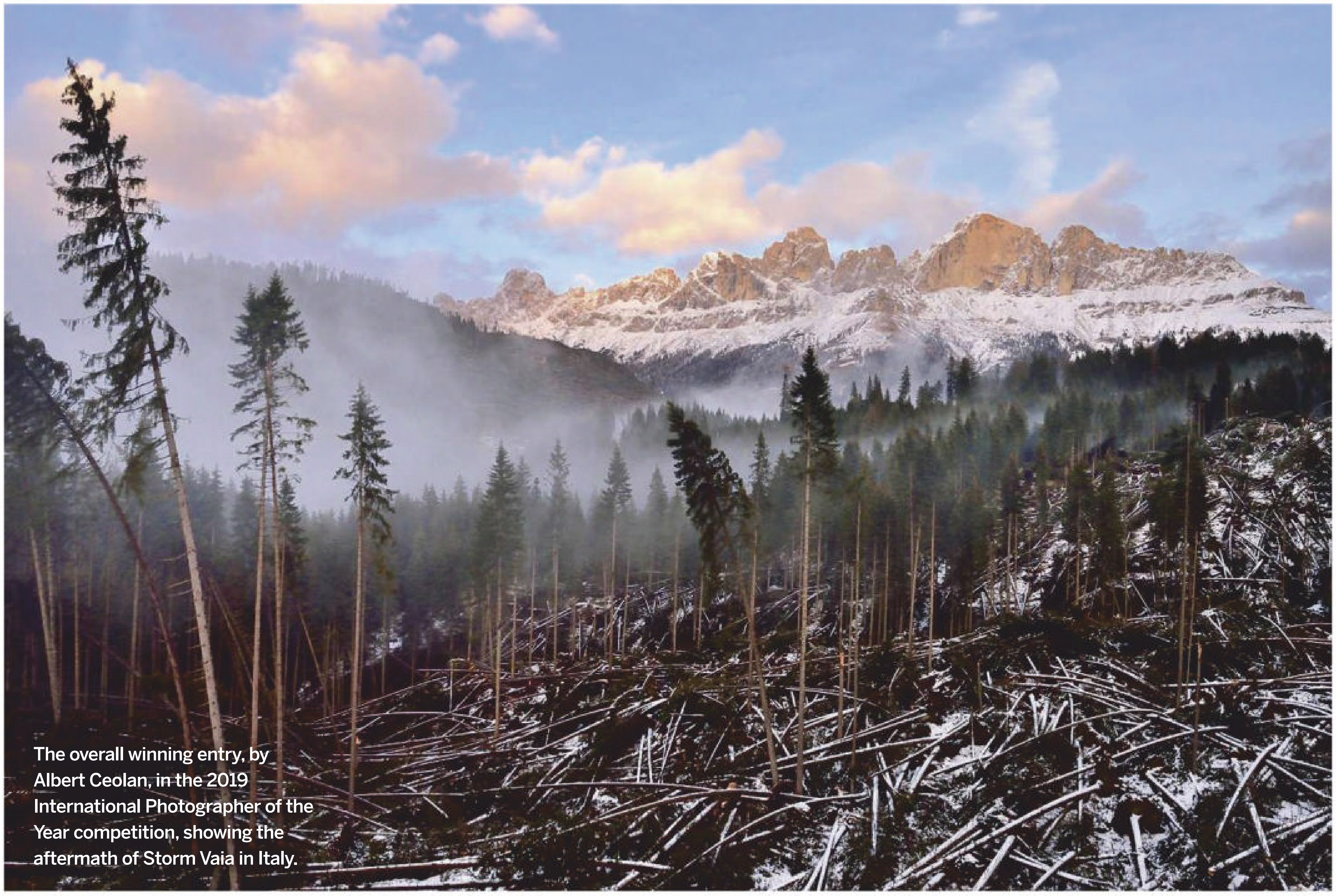
Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month



The overall winning entry, by Albert Ceolan, in the 2019 International Photographer of the Year competition, showing the aftermath of Storm Vaia in Italy.

Photo finishers

Albert Ceolan, from Italy, has won the award for International Garden Photographer of the Year with his photograph of a forest ravaged by Storm Vaia in 2018. The storm caused a staggering amount of damage to forests in northeast Italy, ripping up around eight million cubic metres of wood in just one day. The photograph was entered in the new Plants & Planet category, which was created with the aim of spreading a green message to a wider audience. A selection of winning photographs from all main categories in the competition can be seen at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, until 8 March, before touring around the UK. For a full list of venues and dates, visit **igpoty.com**

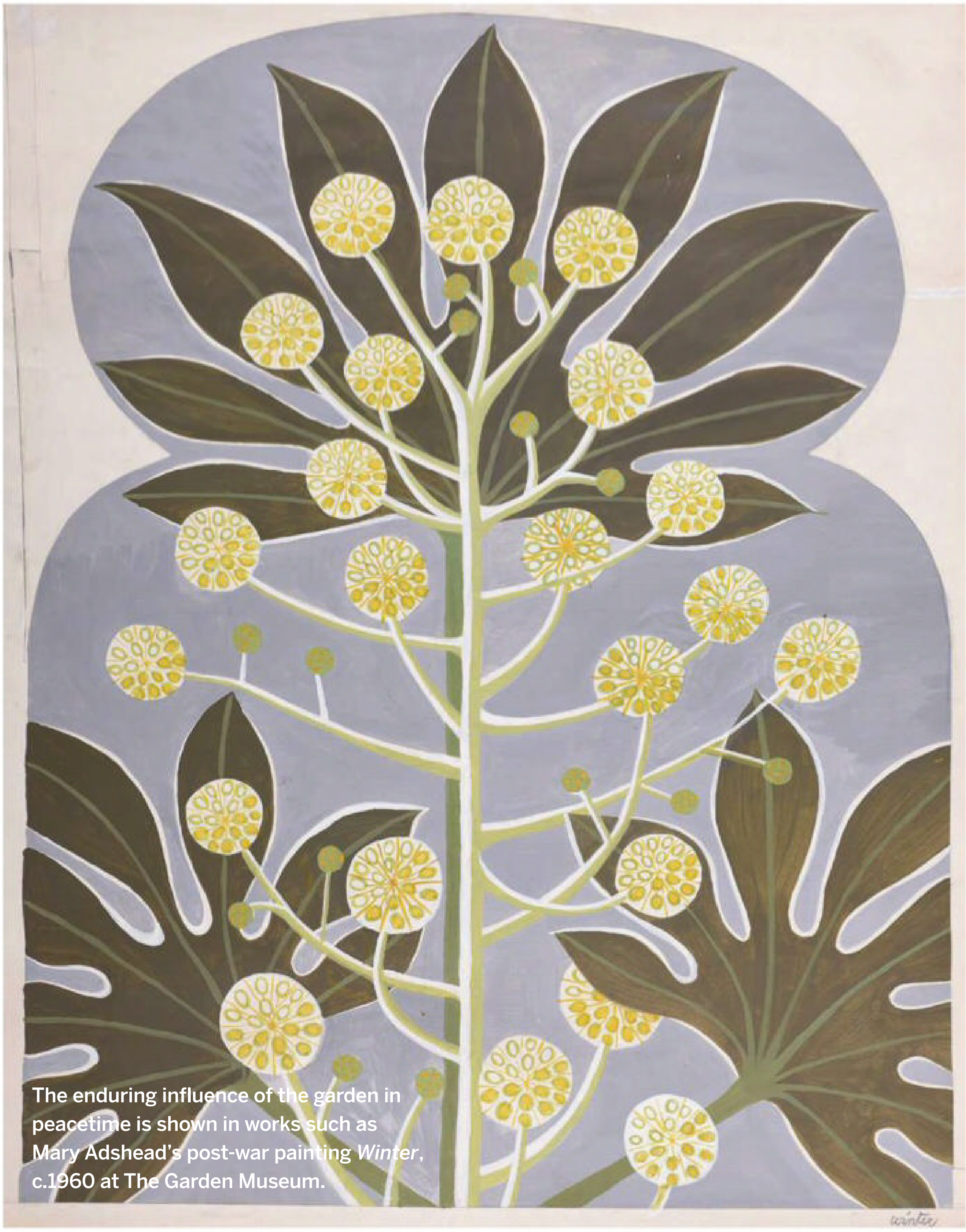
Jacky Parker's image, *Autumn Rudbeckia*, taken at New Forest Lavender Farm in Wiltshire, is the winning entry in the category The Beauty of Plants.

News

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON

NEW JEWELS IN THE CROWN

There is still time for planting asparagus, and Pomona Fruits is offering three new cultivars. 'Guelph Eclipse' (above) is a hardy asparagus ideal for northern climates, 'Vittorio' has thick, disease-resistant spears, and the striking, purple 'Burgundine' is especially sweet when eaten raw. Prices start at £19.50 for 12 crowns of 'Guelph Eclipse' or 'Vittorio', and £19.95 for 12 crowns of 'Burgundine'. **pomonafruits.co.uk**



The enduring influence of the garden in peacetime is shown in works such as Mary Adshead's post-war painting *Winter*, c.1960 at The Garden Museum.

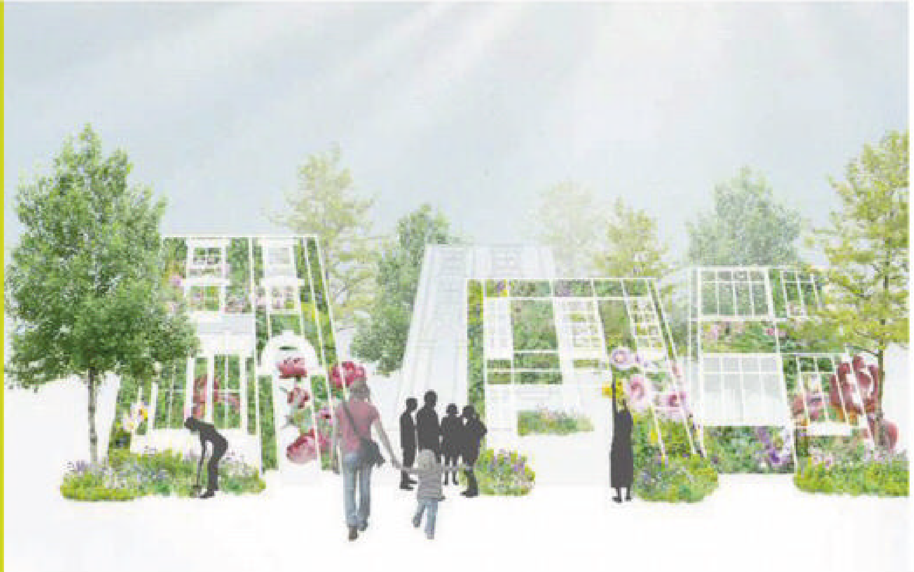
COURTESY OF LISS LLEWELLYN

A peaceful pastime

In the often troubled but peaceful interim between the two World Wars, some of Britain's most talented artists were drawn to the calm beauty of their gardens for inspiration. John Nash, with the horrors of the First World War behind him, rejoiced in the local intimacies of the natural world. Evelyn Dunbar, later to be drawn into the Second World War, found delight in the pastoral environment just beyond her kitchen door. The depiction of the garden as an idyllic, safe space is celebrated in *Sanctuary: Artist-Gardeners 1919-1939* at The Garden Museum. Proceeds from this selling exhibition go towards the museum's educational programmes. Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. Until 5 April. £10. **gardenmuseum.org.uk**

PLANTING WITH PALS

The RHS and NHS have teamed up for the RHS's own Chelsea Flower Show Garden, which aims to address the issue of loneliness and promote the act of gardening for good mental health. The *RHS Garden for Friendship* will be designed by Jo Thompson in collaboration with broadcaster Zoe Ball. Both women believe in the benefits of gardening for strengthening self-esteem and boosting social connections and skills. The garden will represent an urban street, with plants filling doorsteps, balconies and windowboxes, and aims to inspire visitors to 'green up' their communities. After the show, a competition will award one NHS Mental Health Trust with the plants from the garden for patients and staff to enjoy. **rhs.org.uk**



RHS

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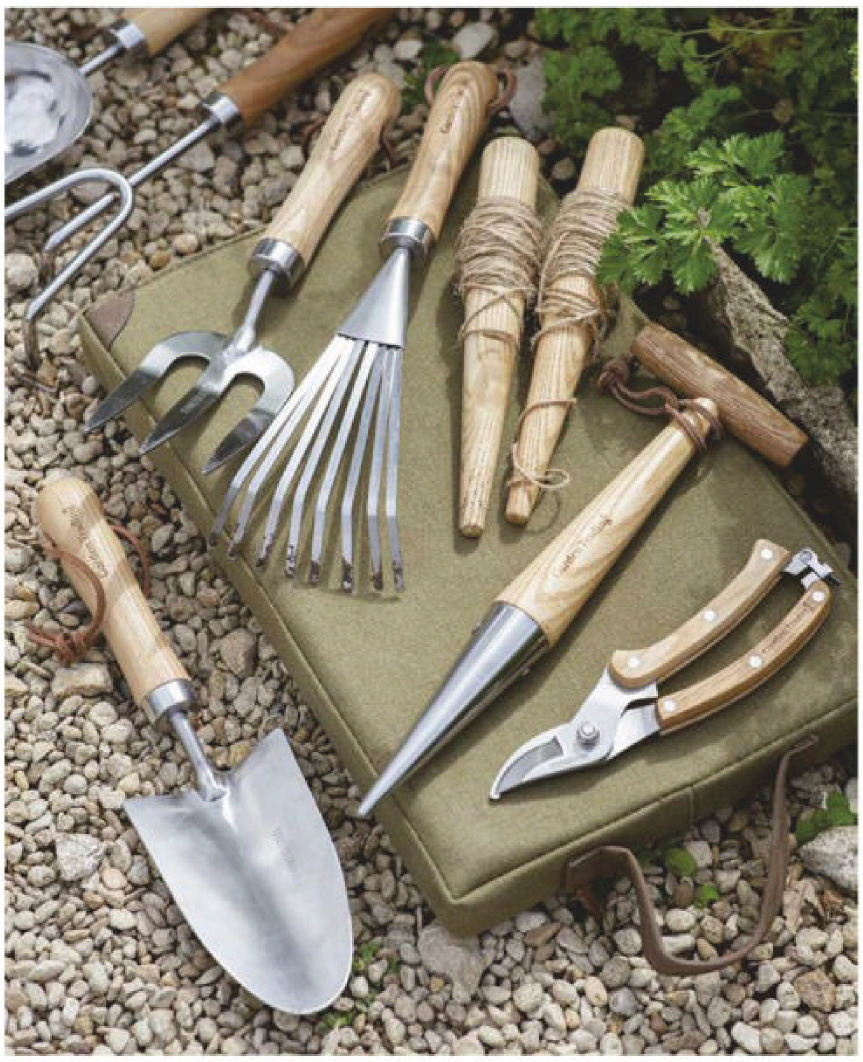
CREATE AN OUTDOOR SPACE FOR SPRINGTIME

With spring just around the corner, now's the ideal time to head back outside and lay the foundation for the outdoor space you really want. Wondering how to make your garden a real extension of your living and entertaining areas ready to enjoy next season? Here are our 5Ps of outdoor planning.

Preparation: Whilst not the most fun of garden chores, clearing debris brought by the wind, rain and frost of the winter months will give you clarity. Clear away leaves, plants which didn't survive and store toys and tools for a better idea of how your space could work.

Purpose: To turn your garden into a real outdoor living area is a matter of purpose. A space to work outside when it's warmer. A private screening area for your favourite films. Or a space for children to play in the fresh air. Comfortable seating, fire pits for warmth and ambient lighting make a workable office, outdoor lounge or play space.



Planting: Once you've identified your different areas and what gaps there are to fill, deciding on plants comes next. Established shrubs and trees for borders? Or starting from scratch with seeds in a cold frame? Perhaps it's combining a mixture of maturation for your plants for different areas. Think about pots which give you flexibility to move around the garden and add instant life where it's needed most.

Populating: Life in your garden is priceless. Watching garden birds feed, butterflies fluttering and bees buzzing to collect pollen must surely be one of the best parts of spending time outdoors. Entice wildlife to your garden with bird feeders and wildlife houses and watch the visitors make themselves at home.

People: Reward your hard work by enjoying it whenever you can. Allow plants to feed your creativity. Be braver, even when it's cool to have breakfast outside. Or host friends for a slow Saturday lunch in the beautiful outdoor space you've lovingly created.

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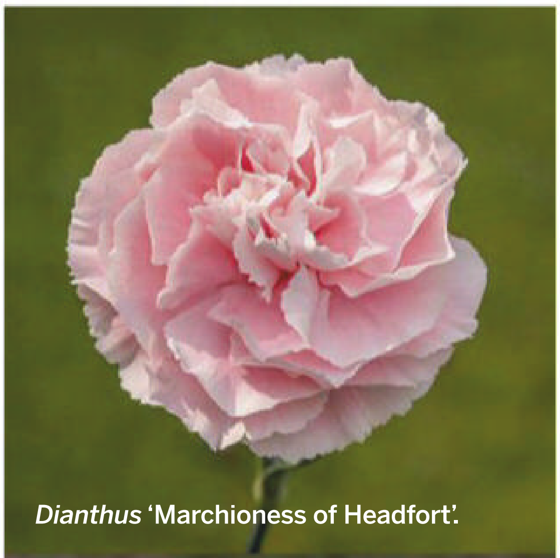
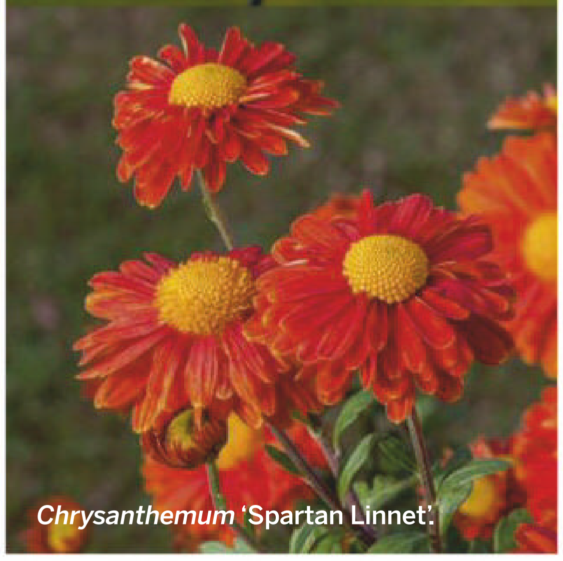


Dianthus 'Marchioness of Headfort'.

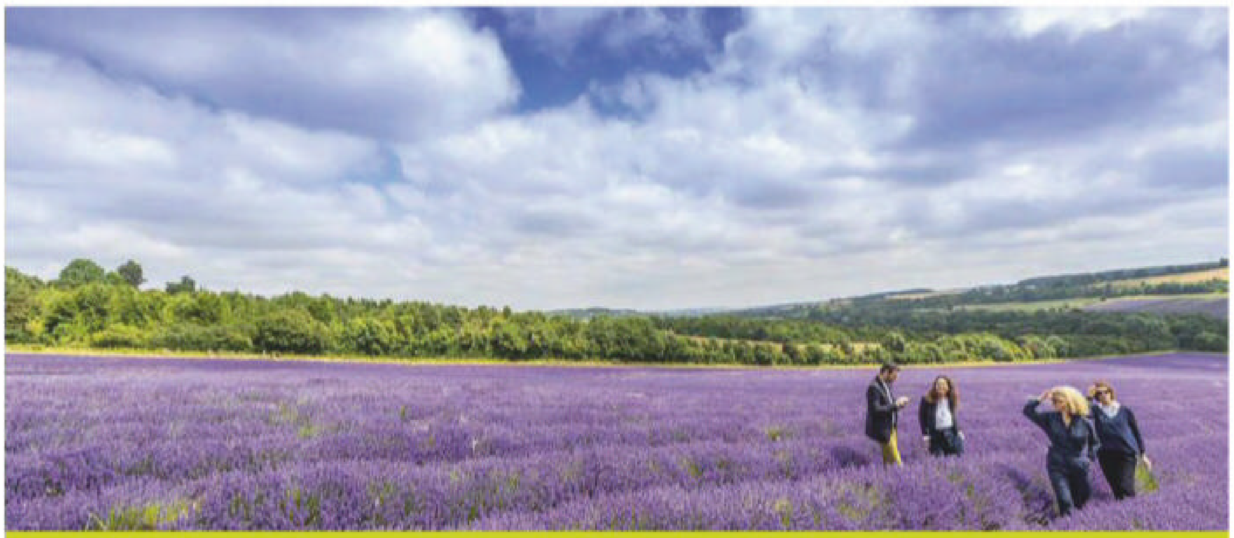


Chrysanthemum 'Spartan Linnet'.

C DAWSON

A RARE BREED

Plant Heritage, in conjunction with the RHS, has launched a new competition, Threatened Plant of the Year, to showcase rare and unusual plants, specifically cultivars, such as *Dianthus* 'Marchioness of Headfort' and *Chrysanthemum* 'Spartan Linnet', that were sold before 2005 but are now considered threatened in cultivation. The shortlisted plants and winning entry will be announced at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival in July. To find out more about the competition visit **plantheritage.org.uk**



Lavender daydreams

Lavender is a nostalgic scent for many, conjuring recollections of calm, summer days. It is this feeling, alongside a desire to champion home-grown *Lavandula angustifolia*, that has inspired Lavenderland, a new collection from perfume maker Jo Malone. The limited-edition line uses lavender from Castle Farm in Kent (above), and features three perfumes with accompaniments of wisteria, silver birch and coriander. Prices start at £50 for 30ml. jomalone.co.uk

Rock on

Newby Hall in Yorkshire has announced a five-year restoration of its historic rock garden, led by head gardener, Phil Cormie. The outbreak of the First World War, meant that work on the garden ceased soon after its creation. With the clearing back of overgrown trees and plants, the scale and drama of the rock faces has already become apparent. Newby Hall & Gardens reopens on 1 April. Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 5AE. Tuesday-Sunday, 11am-5pm. £14. newbyhall.com

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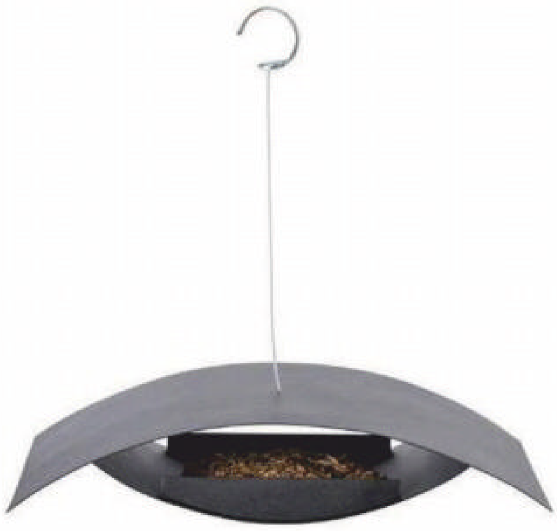
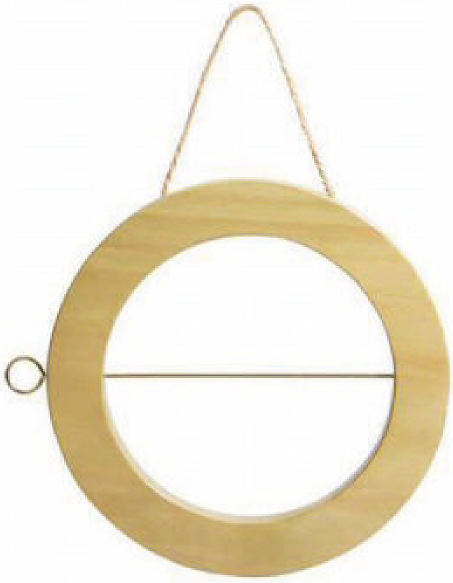
3 FOR THE GARDEN… *BIRDFEEDERS*



SLEEK

Esschert Steel Feeder, £29.99, bakker.com



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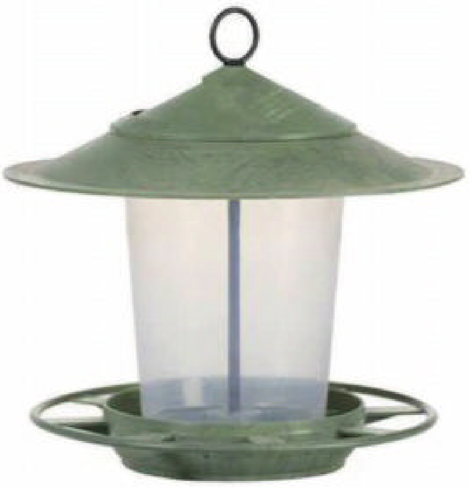
Apple Bird Feeder, £5, sainsburys.co.uk



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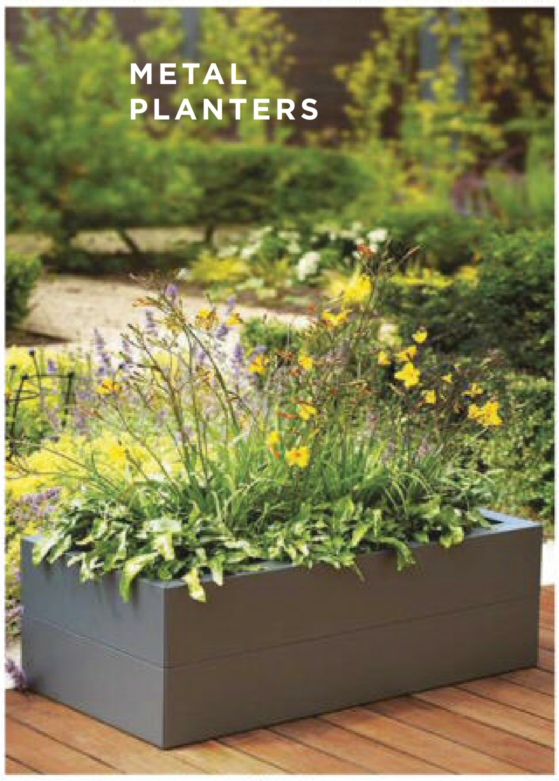

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Diary

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON AND ANNIE GATTI

① **Decorative Antiques Fair** The garden as a gallery is the theme for the 31st Decorative Antiques Fair at the Pavilion in Bath, with antique pots, urns, benches and even a water fountain up for grabs. 6-8 March, 11am-5pm. £5. North Parade Road, Bath, Somerset BA2 4EU. Tel 01278 784912, bathdecorativeantiquesfair.co.uk

② **Yorkshire Sculpture Park** Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos will be transforming the park's Underground Gallery and gardens with her vibrant sculptures. 7 March – 3 January 2021, 10am-5pm. Admission free. West Bretton, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 4LG. Tel 01924 832631, ysp.org.uk

③ **Gardening the Millennium** Midori Shintani, head gardener of Tokachi Millennium Forest will be discussing the modern garden movement in Japan at an open talk for the University of Bath Gardening Club. 9 March, 7.30pm. £6. East Building, Claverton Down, Bath, Somerset BA2 7PJ. ubgc.org

④ **New York High Line** Dr Jill Raggett, Emeritus Reader in Gardens and Designed Landscapes at Writtle University College will be discussing the New York linear park in a talk for the Gardens Trust. 11 March, 6.30pm. £15. The Gallery, 77 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EL. thegardenstrust.org

⑤ **Stylish Structures** Learn how to make stylish structures for the kitchen garden using hazel, willow, birch and steel with gardener and artist Jacky Mills and designer Alison Jenkins. 13 March, 10am-4pm. £85, including lunch. New House Farm, Northend, Bath, Somerset BA1 8ES. Tel 07956 267173 or email alison@alisonjenkins.co.uk

⑥ **Celebrating English Gardens** In the run up to Chichester Cathedral's Flower Festival, Martin Duncan, head gardener at Arundel Castle, and Margie Hoffnung from the Gardens Trust are giving a joint talk on the English garden. 19 March, 2pm. £15 with afternoon tea. Oving Jubilee Hall, Oving, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 2DQ. Tel 01243 813591 (or email flowerfestival@chichestercathedral.org.uk), chichestercathedral.org.uk

⑦ **Landscape as Art** Learn how to analyse historic gardens in the same way as a painting and other art forms on this weekend course run by garden historian Dr Paula Henderson at the V&A. 21-22 March, 11am-4pm. £195. Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL. Tel 020 7942 2000, vam.ac.uk

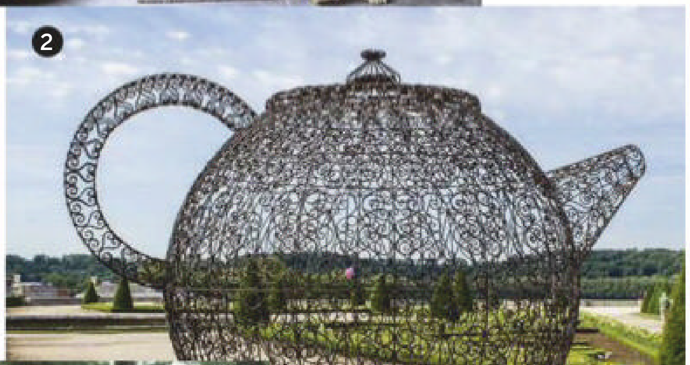
⑧ **Rare Plant Fair** Find plants from some of the best nurseries in the South West at The Bishop's Palace in Wells. 22 March, 10am-4pm, £7 on the door for entry to the palace, gardens and fair. The Bishop's Palace, Wells, Somerset BA5 2PD. Tel 01749 988111, bishopspalace.org.uk

⑨ **Borde Hill Garden Magnolia Tour** Enjoy a tour of the garden's outstanding collection of magnolias with head gardener Andy Stevens. 25 March, 11-12pm. £12. Borde Hill Lane, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1XP. Tel 01444 450326, bordehill.co.uk

⑩ **Charterhouse Gardens Tours** Take a rare opportunity to explore the almshouse gardens in the company of head gardener Kate Robinson. 26 March. 10.45am. £20. Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6AN. Tel 020 3818 8873, thecharterhouse.org

⑪ **Tour of two Monmouthshire gardens** Book now for a Gardens Days Out tour of two neighbouring gardens – The Pant and New Inn Farm – that are imaginatively connected to the landscape. 24 April. £110. Tel 0117 317 9874, gardendaysout.com

⑫ **Society of Garden Designers Spring Conference** Sign up now for this year's conference where the topic is colour. Speakers include Claude Cormier, Steve Martino and Jimi Blake. 25 April. £161 (for tickets booked before 14 March). RGS, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR. sgd.org.uk



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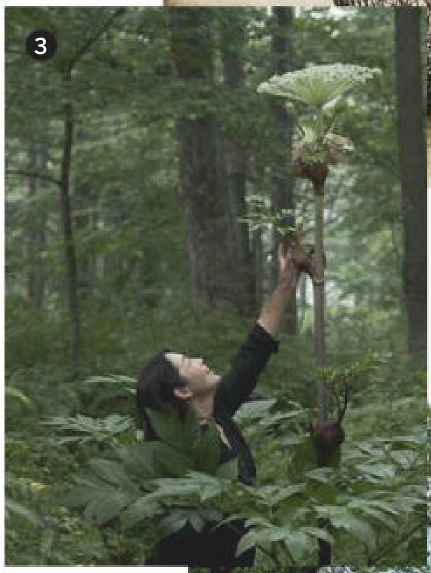

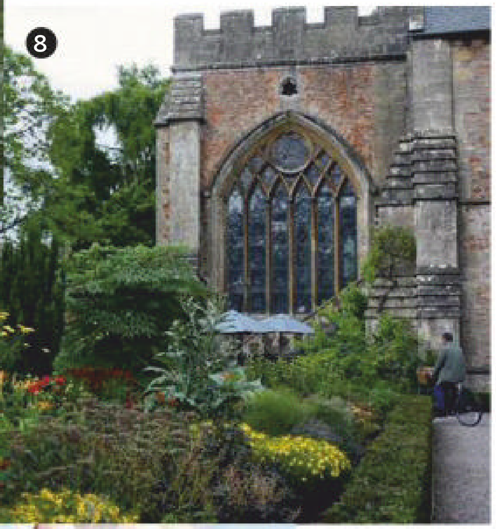

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One of our most popular courses, led by master horticulturist Ben Pope, which aims to take each student through all the practical elements of caring for a garden from soil, tools, maintenance, seed sowing and propagating, weed control and pests and diseases. The first 3 days will be spent at the Chelsea Physic Garden and the final day will be spent gaining practical experience in Rosemary Alexander's much praised garden near Petersfield and the garden nearby, where Ben is in charge. Participants will be given a chance to prune, plant, sow seeds and regular maintenance tasks will be discussed. A light lunch and refreshments will be provided daily.

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Covers the best in planting design while training in the more serious aspects of horticultural techniques. Practical sessions held at Arundel Castle under the guidance of head gardener Martin Duncan and at Sandhill Farm House, Rogate. Lectures by many leading gardening personalities and regular visits to outstanding private gardens. Students also learn to draw up planting plans.
(1 day a week (Tues), 10.30am–3.15pm, over three terms)

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January – March 2021

Based at the Chelsea Physic Garden and led by Rosemary Alexander and architect Catriona Rowbotham, the course is an overview of Garden Design, covering all the elements needed to rethink an average garden. Taking students step by step through site surveying, using the grid, horizontal and vertical features, garden layouts and planting plans, costing and specification, plus drawing tuition and homework on design and plant portfolios. Tutors are well respected in the industry and will guide students on how to succeed in this diverse profession.
(2 days a week (Wed & Thu), 10.30am–3.15pm, plus 2 days homework)

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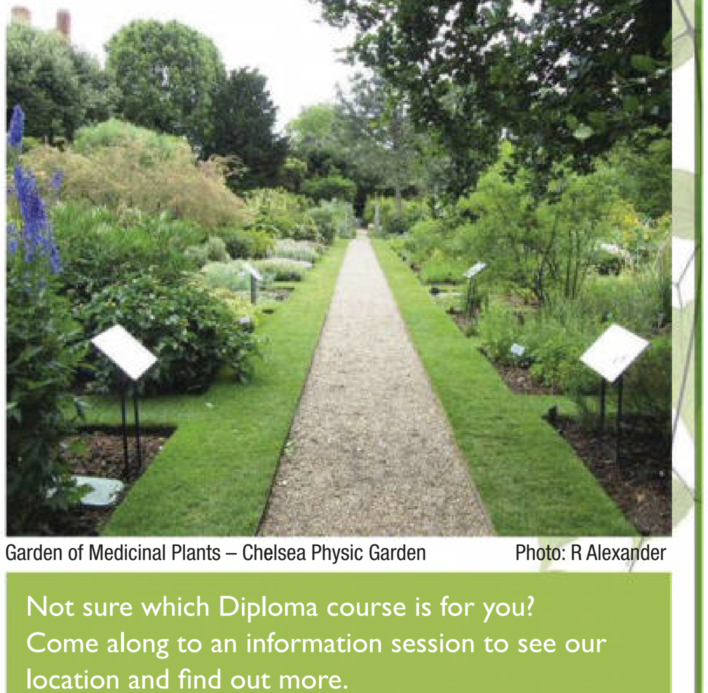
Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

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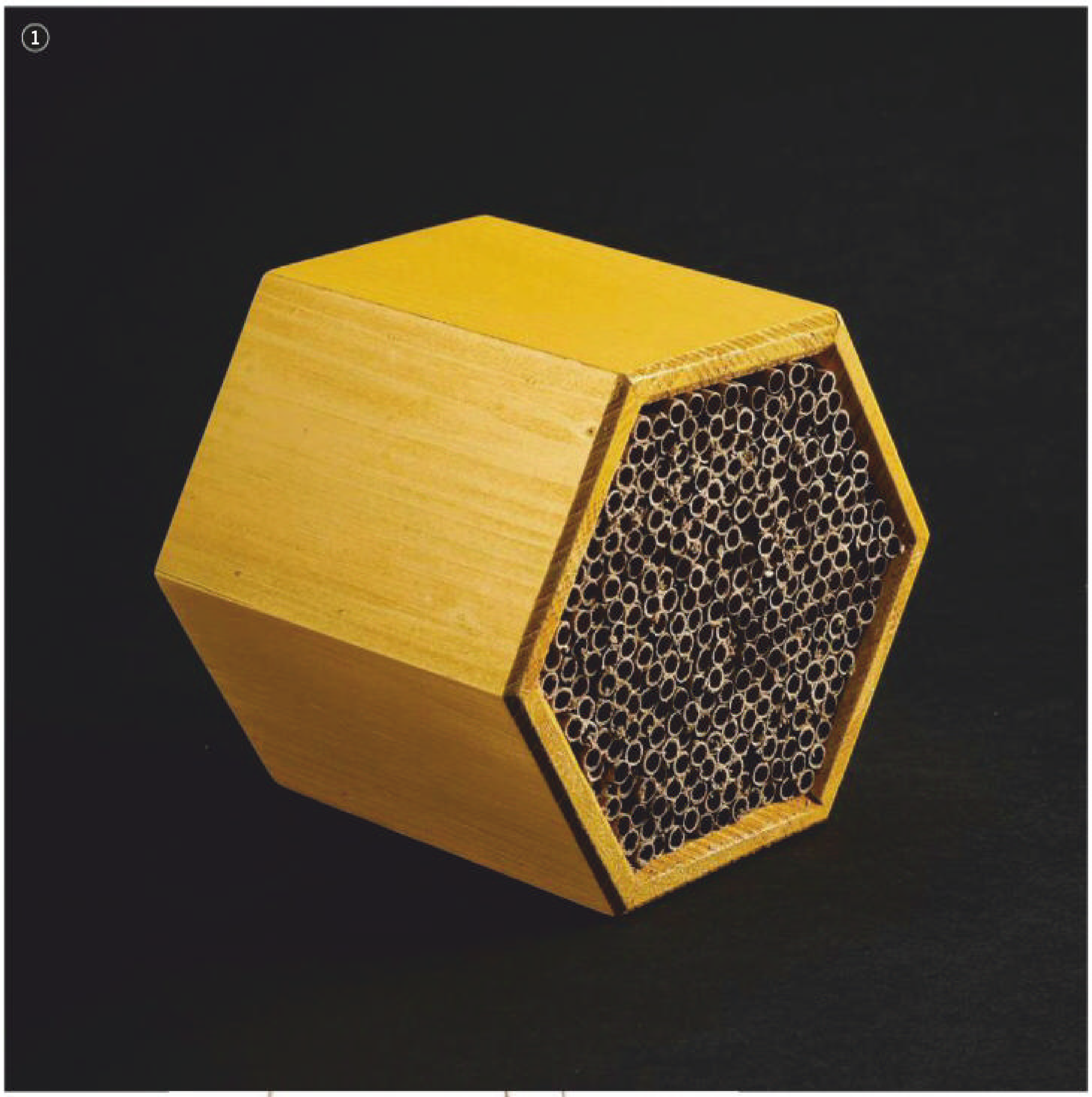

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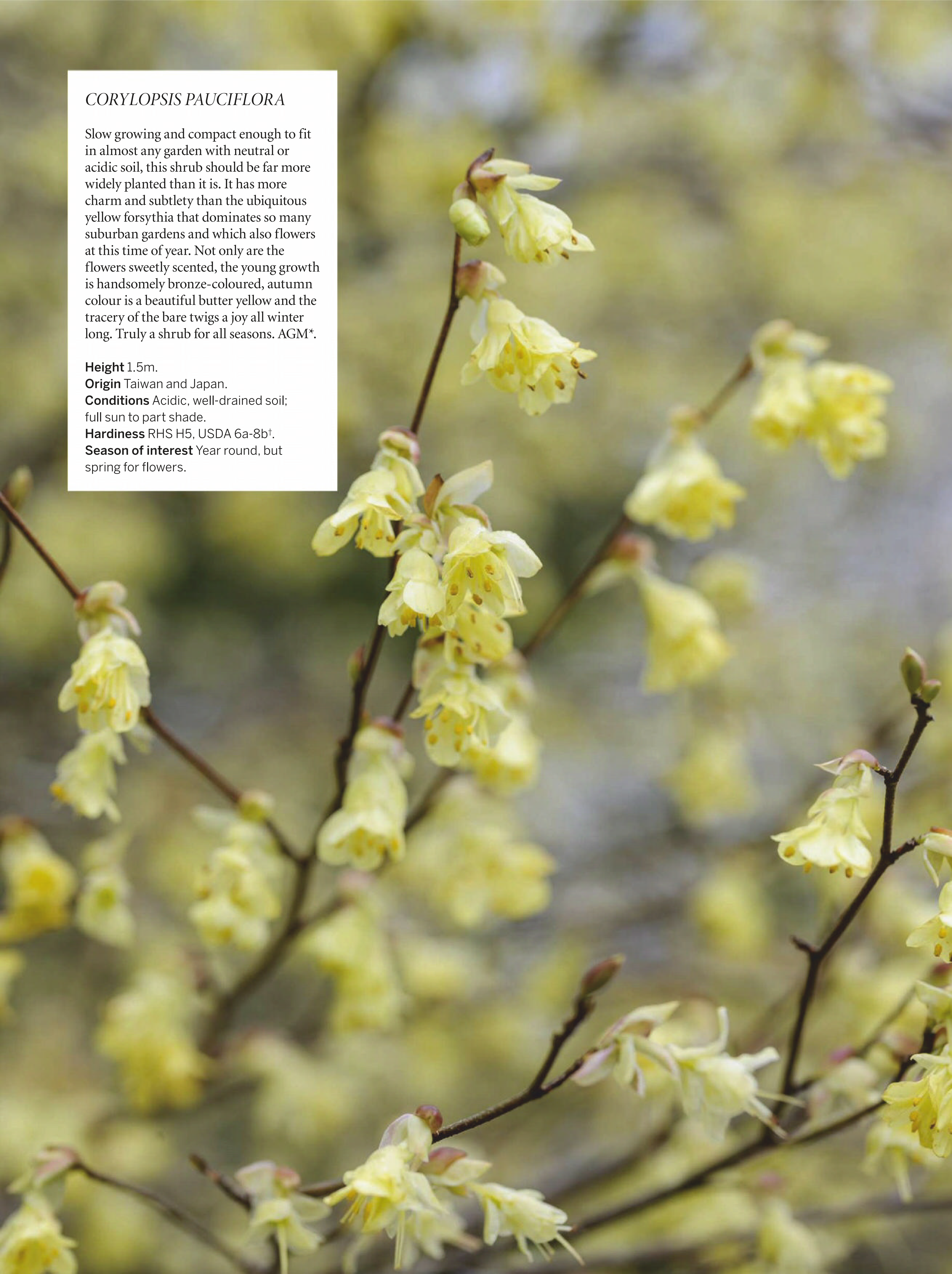
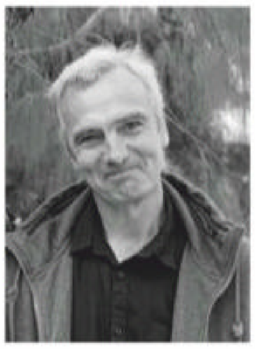
CORYLOPSIS PAUCIFLORA

Slow growing and compact enough to fit in almost any garden with neutral or acidic soil, this shrub should be far more widely planted than it is. It has more charm and subtlety than the ubiquitous yellow forsythia that dominates so many suburban gardens and which also flowers at this time of year. Not only are the flowers sweetly scented, the young growth is handsomely bronze-coloured, autumn colour is a beautiful butter yellow and the tracery of the bare twigs a joy all winter long. Truly a shrub for all seasons. AGM*.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Taiwan and Japan.
Conditions Acidic, well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b[†].
Season of interest Year round, but spring for flowers.





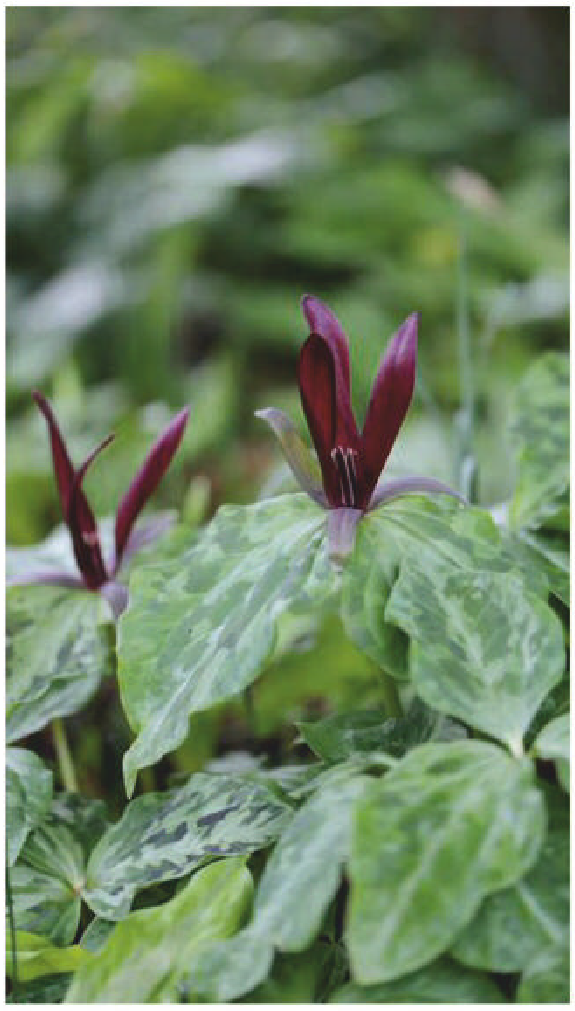
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

March plants

As March welcomes longer, warmer days Keith takes pleasure in fragrant flowering shrubs and the delicate, small flowers that push their way through cold earth

WORDS KEITH WILEY PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

Keith Wiley
runs Wildside
garden in Devon
wileyatwildside.com



TRILLIUM KURABAYASHII

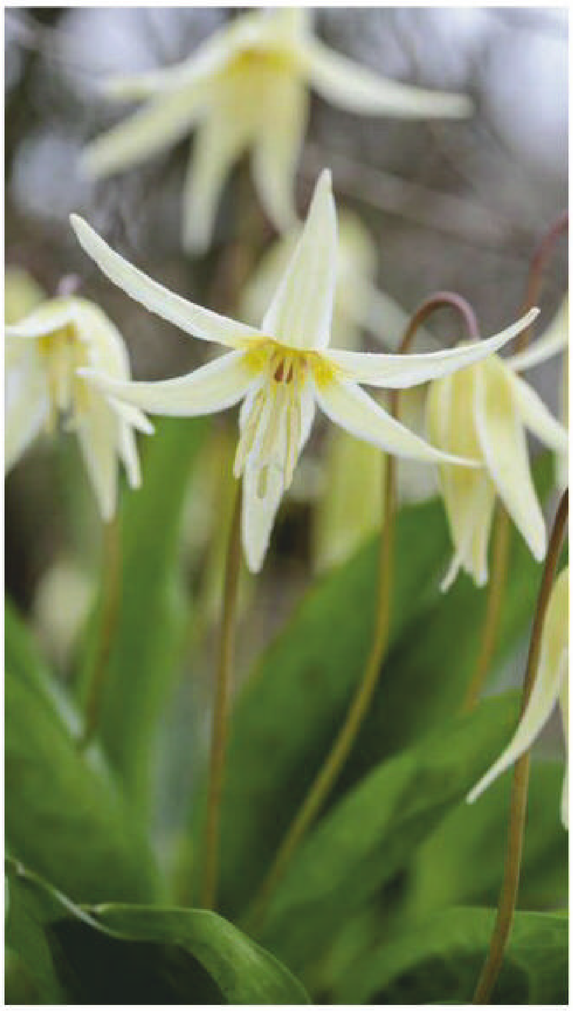
Trilliums are the wakerobins of North America and two are the state flowers of Ohio and Ontario in Canada. This species masqueraded for many years in older plant collections as either *T. sessile* or else *T. chloropetalum*. But, with its handsome mottled leaves *T. kurabayashii* is easier to grow than either of those two species, tolerating a more exposed position in my experience than any other trillium, although it will obviously prefer a more sheltered spot. Very happy to self-seed itself at Wildside, especially if annually mulched with leaf mould in the winter.

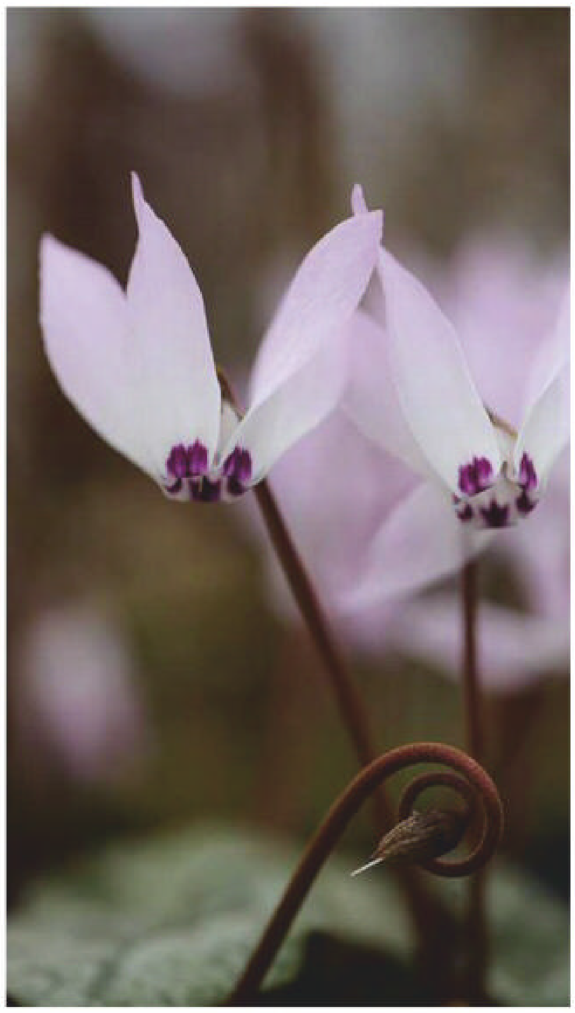
Height 30-60cm depending on strain.
Origin Oregon and California, USA.
Conditions Fertile, well-drained soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.
Season of interest Spring (flowers); early summer (foliage).

ERYTHRONIUM OREGONUM SUBSP. *LEUCANDRUM*

The first of the North American erythronium species to flower. Beautiful mottled leaves with a slightly jade base colour in the forms I have seen. Creamy-white flowers shading towards yellow at the base of the outside of the petals. Most references say this subspecies has white anthers but they are really more cream than white. The filaments, which support the anthers, are distinctly broader at their base, a characteristic shared only among North American species, the white-flowered *E. oregonum* and pink-flowered *E. revolutum*. Both will happily self-seed.

Height 30cm in flower.
Origin Oregon, USA.
Conditions Well-drained, preferably leafy soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.
Season of interest Late winter to spring.





CYCLAMEN LIBANOTICUM

A hardy cyclamen species that has a reputation for not being so and, as a result, is rarely seen growing in the open garden. A very showy species with handsomely marbled foliage and large flowers that have a peppery smell. Despite coming from a very sunny climate, it prefers a shaded spot if grown under cover (beneath a greenhouse bench is good) as it resents strong sunlight, which will cause premature leaf-drop. Keep moist in growth but allow to become almost dry in the summer when the leaves drop. Easy from seed.

Height 15cm.
Origin Mountains in Lebanon.
Conditions Acidic, well-drained soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 7a-11.
Season of interest Winter to spring for foliage, late winter to spring for flowers.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

BRED BY

PETER MOORE

Peter's Plant breeding was featured on BBC Gardeners World 2018

Plant Breeder Peter Moore is marking 60 years in horticulture by giving 25% of his plant royalties to **horticultural charity Perennial.**

One of the earliest flowering plants he has bred is: *Sarcococca* Winter Gem 'PMOORE03'

During the winter this amazing glossy evergreen *Sarcococca* (winter box) is smothered with highly fragrant honey-scented white flowers, each one emerging from a deep red bud. The perfect plant for borders and/or containers.

Royalties from three other highly acclaimed garden plants sold in the UK will also be donated to Perennial this year, so now is your chance to brighten up your garden and help a charity at the same time.

For stockists, both garden centre and mail order, visit Peter's website at **www.bredbypetermoore.co.uk** the home of exceptional garden plants.

CAMELLIA TRANSNOKOENSIS

There is no question camellias are wonderful foliage plants with amazing flowers but they mostly lack grace in their overall shape to win me over. This species, along with the similar, but more widely available *C.* 'Cornish Snow', are exceptions. Both have white flowers crowding the branches and an arching graceful habit. 'Cornish Snow' will cover itself in flowers for many weeks, even if repeatedly frosted, but *C. transnokoensis* may be slightly more tender, although it has more attractive, purple-flushed, young growths. Both are great. AGM.

Height 2-3m.
Origin Taiwan.
Conditions Well-drained, preferably acidic soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.
Season of interest Early spring for flowers, year round for foliage.

CORYDALIS SOLIDA 'BETH EVANS'

In the wild, and in the garden if allowed to self-seed, *Corydalis solida* is very variable in its flower colour. The pink and red forms are mostly found in Romania, but 'Beth Evans' is a selected seedling of garden origin. It appears in early spring, flowers and dies back to underground tubers almost immediately, leaving no trace above ground for the rest of the year. As a result, knowing where it is planted is quite important, so I grow this plant in aquatic pots and sink these in the garden among other spring bulbs such as crocus.

Height 15cm.
Origin Garden origin (species Europe, from Finland and Sweden to Greece).
Conditions Cool soil, on the moister side; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest Spring.

BULBINELLA NUTANS

As it comes originally from the Cape region of South Africa, this bulbous plant with its fleshy, strap-like foliage would appear to be totally unsuited to outdoor cultivation in the UK – especially as it starts to grow in the autumn. However, against all the odds, I have so far found it to be remarkably tough and frost-resistant when grown in a very well-drained, sandy soil in a sunny location. The flowers, resembling an elegant, scented kniphofia, appear in early spring and are less tolerant of late frosts than the leaves were through the winter.

Height 30cm in leaf; 90cm in flower.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Well-drained soil (best dry in summer); full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.
Season of interest Spring for flowers.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best

March will always be associated for me with daffodils and crocuses, which on sunny days can lift the spirits as winter draws towards a close. Good places to see a wide selection is in the gardens, or in the alpine houses, of **RHS Garden Wisley**, the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew,** or the **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh** but there are numerous gardens around the UK where you can see daffodils this month.

Godinton House in Kent is a Jacobean house surrounded by a fine garden with herbaceous borders, a rose garden and a three-acre wild garden that in March and April is filled not only with daffodils, but fritillaries, primroses and other spring flowers. Godinton House & Gardens, Godinton Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 3BP. Tel 01233 643854, godintonhouse.co.uk

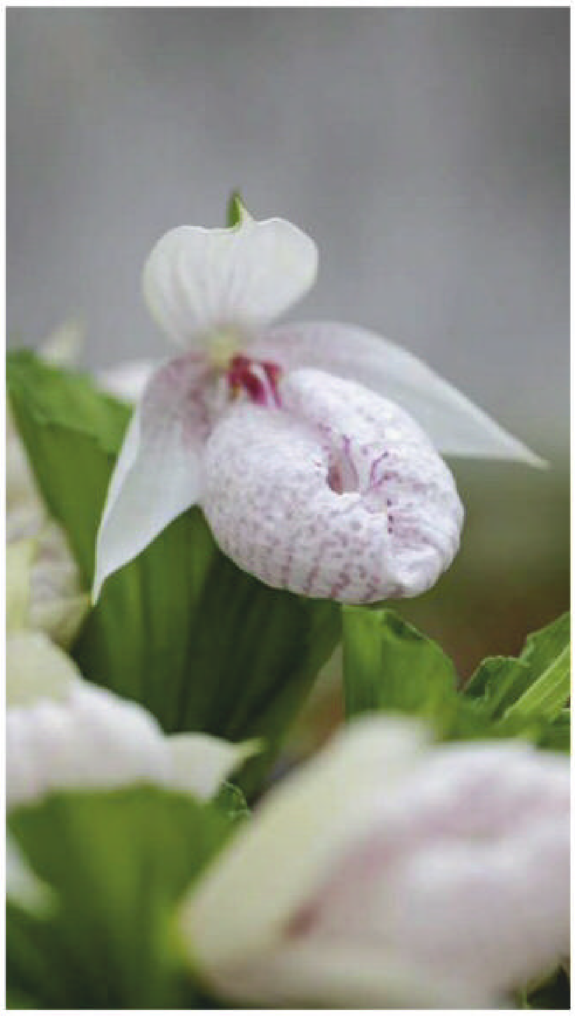
For the literary minded **Dora's Field** in Cumbria has a certain poignancy. The daffodil-gazing poet William Wordsworth once owned the field and had planned to build a house on it for his daughter Dora, but after her untimely death, he planted the area with daffodils in her memory instead. It's now maintained by the National Trust and in March it is still a mass of daffodils and bluebells. Next to St Mary's Church, Rydal, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9LR. nationaltrust.org

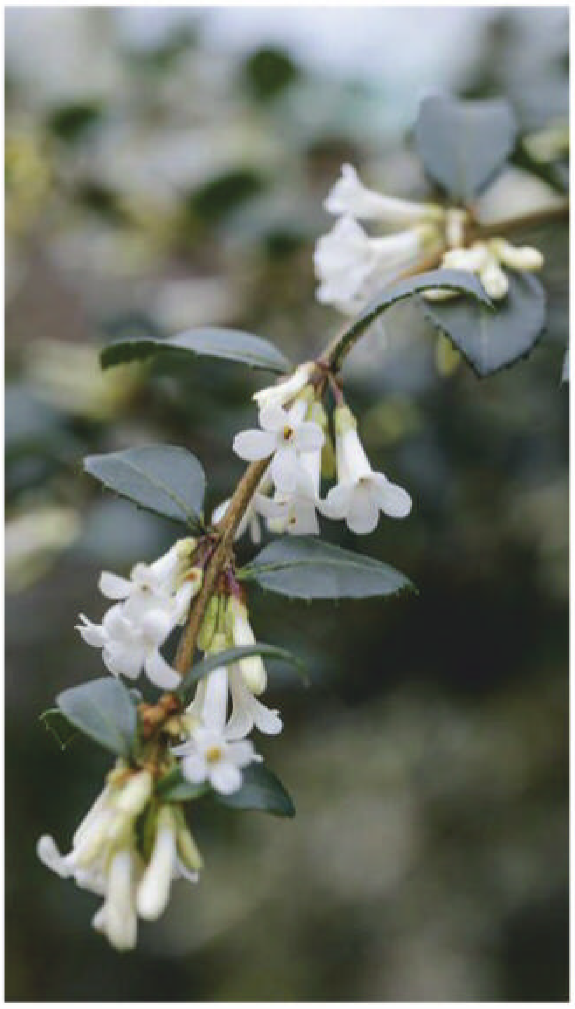
In Wales, where daffodils are of course the national flower, there are several excellent gardens to see them. **Bodnant Garden**, which was conceived in ▷

CYPRIPEDIUM FORMOSANUM

A superb slipper orchid, which if happy will make a sizeable clump. This could easily have made it as one of my favourites later in the year as it is a very handsome foliage plant but the wonderfully marked, pouched flowers are its main attraction. The pleated, two-lobed leaves, which are joined in the middle, are nearly 30cm across and unfurl properly after flowering. Starts to grow early in the year so it is vulnerable to frosts catching these early shoots that carry the flowers. Best under the canopy of deciduous trees. AGM.

Height 20cm in leaf; 30cm in flower.
Origin Taiwan.
Conditions Well-drained, leafy soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5 (the early growth can be more H3), USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Spring for flowers; all summer for foliage.





OSMANTHUS DELAVAYI

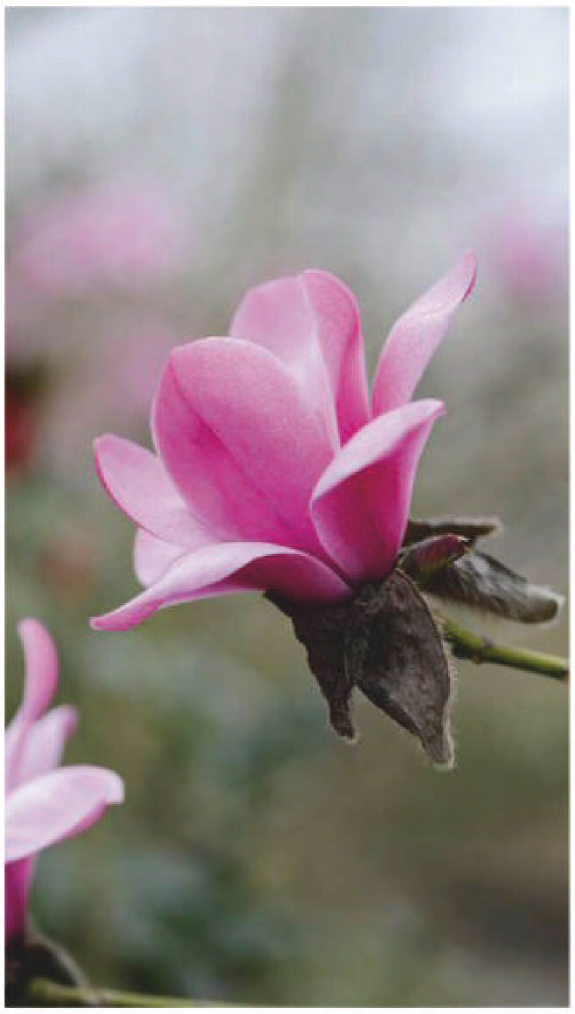
A small-leaved, evergreen shrub that covers itself for weeks with small, white flowers. In spring you can smell its strong, sweet scent from yards away. Normally seen as an amorphous mass of randomly directed branches, it can be carefully pruned and the branches thinned to produce a gracefully arching shape. This considerably enhances the flowering effect as well as creating more planting space beneath its canopy for other spring-flowering bulbs or perennials. Just removing crossing branches is a good start for achieving this effect. AGM.

Height 2-3m.
Origin China.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 9a-11.
Season of interest Spring for flowers, year round as evergreen shrub.

MAGNOLIA DAWSONIANA 'CHYVERTON RED'

One of the Asiatic magnolias with very large flowers that grow into large trees. Nearly all of this type of magnolia take at least ten years before they flower, so patience as well as space is required. Most also flower quite early in the spring so the flowers become susceptible to frosts, which is why the mild gardens of Cornwall in southwest England are a hot-spot for their cultivation. This one took 20 years to flower for me from scions given to us from the original plant in Chyverton, Cornwall. It has the reddest flowers of any magnolia I have seen.

Height 10m.
Origin Garden origin (species China).
Conditions Fertile, well-drained soil; sun to part shade, sheltered from strong winds.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Spring for flowers.



▷ the 1870s by the industrial chemist Henry Pochin, is most famous for its terraces, beautiful herbaceous borders and laburnum arch, but it also has a fabulous spring display of daffodils. If like me your preference is for the smaller types then look out for the early flowering *Narcissus cyclamineus* and the small, lemon-yellow *Narcissus* 'Cedric Morris', which has been known to flower at Christmas. However, the main daffodil display kicks off in March when the Old Park meadow and grassy Glades are carpeted in yellow. Tal-y-Cafn, near Colwyn Bay, Conwy LL28 5RE. Tel 01492 650460, nationaltrust.org.uk

Still in Wales, and just a few miles from Bodnant, is **Aberconwy Nursery**, which opens again this month after its winter break. It is without doubt, the best alpine nursery in the UK, with every plant beautifully grown, and is where I have sourced many of my smaller plants. Glan Conwy, Colwyn Bay, Conwy LL28 5TL. Tel 01492 580875, aberconwynursery.co.uk

If you can't make it to North Wales, then Aberconwy is one of the excellent nurseries often found at the **Alpine Garden Society** shows around the country (including three this month), which I can't recommend highly enough. The **Scottish Rock Garden Club** fills a similar role in both Scotland and in some parts of northern England. alpinegardensociety.net and srgc.net

March can sometimes still feel very wintery so a mild Cornish garden seems a good place to finish, this month. The seven-acre garden at **Mount Edgcumbe** on the Cornish side of the estuary opposite Plymouth holds the National Collection of Camellias containing more than 1,000 species and cultivars of this delicate flower. Cremyll, Torpoint, Cornwall PL10 1HZ. Tel 01752 822236, mountedgcumbe.gov.uk

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

High on life

Wedged between saw-toothed peaks and majestic glaciers, the Swiss region of Valais can take you back to nature

PHOTOGRAPHS: © VALAIS/WALLIS PROMOTION - FREDERIC HUBER & PASCAL GERTSCHEN

Valais is a playground for adventure-seekers and nature-lovers alike, with ribbons of breathtaking trails cutting through its unspoilt countryside. Hike these winding paths and you'll discover the majestic Matterhorn mountain, the Rhône Valley's sprawling vineyards, as well as the magnificent Great Aletsch Glacier. And, at the end of the day, you can retreat to one of many cosy cabins dotted across the mountainside. This is the perfect place to escape the bustle of daily life. Hit these four famed trails for a grand adventure:

01.

Chemin du Vignoble (Vineyard Trail)

Drinking good wine is one of life's greatest pleasures, so what better way to explore Valais's winemaking heritage than by hiking this 74km cinematic trail? With sun-drenched slopes and fertile soil, Valais is the biggest wine-growing region of Switzerland and is also the home of Raclette du Valais AOP, an indulgent cheese. No trip to the region would be complete without sampling some of this famous fare, so make sure you stop off at a traditional restaurant along your hike.

02.

Tour des Dents du Midi

Jagged peaks, shimmering lakes and grand mountain passes… if you want to see the untamed beauty of Valais, check out the 42.5km Tour des Dents du Midi, one of the oldest hiking trails in the region. There are peaks of various heights to scale, though intrepid hikers should try and tackle the Haute Cime (3,275m), the region's highest summit. Keep an eye out for the Portes du Soleil Multi Pass, too. This all-inclusive ticket gives you unlimited access to activities including lifts, swimming pools and tennis as well as great discounts on paragliding, bike rental and more.

03.

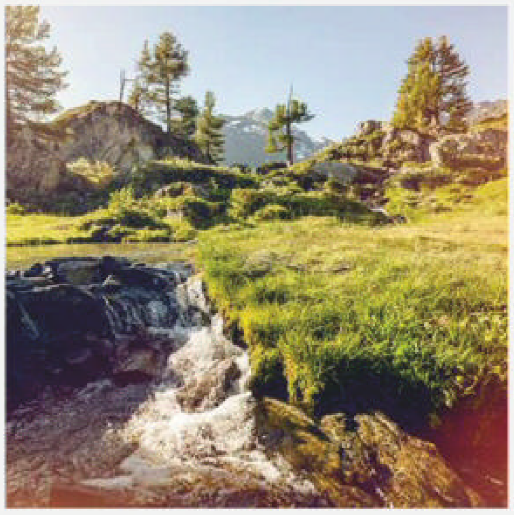
Tour of the Val de Nendaz

Nendaz 4 Vallées may be part of one the biggest ski destinations in Europe, but in the summertime this idyllic spot is also a hiking haven. This peaceful four-day hiking tour meanders across Veysonnaz and Nendaz, allowing you to conquer Mont-Rouge at 2,491m, witness the turquoise waters of the Cleuson dam and spot Europe's biggest larch trees in Balavaux. Afterwards, recharge your batteries and soothe your aching muscles at a serene Swiss spa such as Le Spa des Bisses.

04.

Great Aletsch Glacier Walk

It's no exaggeration to describe the Great Aletsch Glacier Walk as awe-inspiring. Flanked by 4,000m peaks, this UNESCO heritage site offers unimpeded views of the Alps. And it's also Europe's mightiest ice flow, containing enough water to supply every single person on earth with a litre of water every day for 4.5 years. You can traverse this 23km-long rugged terrain and if you want to add a touch of luxury to your trip, you can book a stay at the nearby Villa Cassel, a 19th-century mansion surrounded by exquisite Swiss stone pines, *Pinus cembra.*



Gorgeous gardens

Horticultural enthusiasts should also check out the Ricola herb garden in the hamlet of Blatten, Zermatt, the Japanese garden in Tortin valley, Nendaz, and the Flore-Alpe Alpine Botanical Garden in Champex-Lac.

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Valais

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> I spent a whole summer on my tummy looking for four-leaf clovers and pressing them

GARDENING TALENT

BRIDGET WHEELER

Flowers aren't just for picking, as head gardener Bridget attests working for an organic edible-flower farm in Devon

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

First plant love In our back garden there was a patch where four-leaf clovers would grow and I spent a whole summer on my tummy looking for them and pressing them. I thought it would bring me lots of luck!

Who inspires you? Jan Billington, my boss and creator of Maddocks Farm Organics is an inspiration to me. As a gardener she is observant, intuitive and pragmatic. She is a hugely principled and successful businesswoman and an advocate of organic growing.

Horticultural hero I met [the late] plant hunter Michael Wickenden one torrentially wet and windy day on a visit to his nursery at Cally Gardens in Scotland. He sent me away with copies of his essays about collecting seeds in the wild. It left a big impression on me, and made me want to grow unusual plants and to see them for myself in the wild.

Influential garden Levens Hall was the first place to show me that gardens could be theatre. I love the topiary, it is like chess pieces on a board frozen in time. The whole place is completely captivating.

Most valuable training My four years at Sissinghurst, three as a propagator and one as a gardener. I learnt to propagate a huge range of unusual plants under the excellent mentorship of senior propagator Emma Grigg. I am also grateful to the then head gardener Troy Scott Smith for the opportunities he gave me; it was an exciting time to be there when many parts of the garden were being re-envisaged.

Least favourite plant group I've never been a huge fan of begonias, except for *B. luxurians*, which is stunning. But they taste amazing, like citrus, and since growing them at Maddocks I have come to appreciate them. I think every plant has something to offer.

How to garden more sustainably Water less often. Leave the odd patch of weeds for beneficial insects. Nettles, rosebay willowherb and nasturtiums are important host plants for butterflies, moths and ladybirds. Grow some ivy, it's a wonderful late source of pollen and nectar and provides berries and shelter for birds in harsher months.

Worthwhile books The Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix titles as part of The Garden Plant Series are excellent reference books for learning more about the origins and native habitats of our common garden plants. Also Eliot Coleman's *The New Organic Grower*.

Seasonal happenings in the garden A month or so ago we pruned more than 2,000 roses, which we grow for an organic gin distillery and the beauty industry. Last year we grew lots of Barnhaven's primroses from seed and I can't wait for them to start flowering.

Further information bridgetiwheeler@gmail.com
maddocksfarmorganics.co.uk

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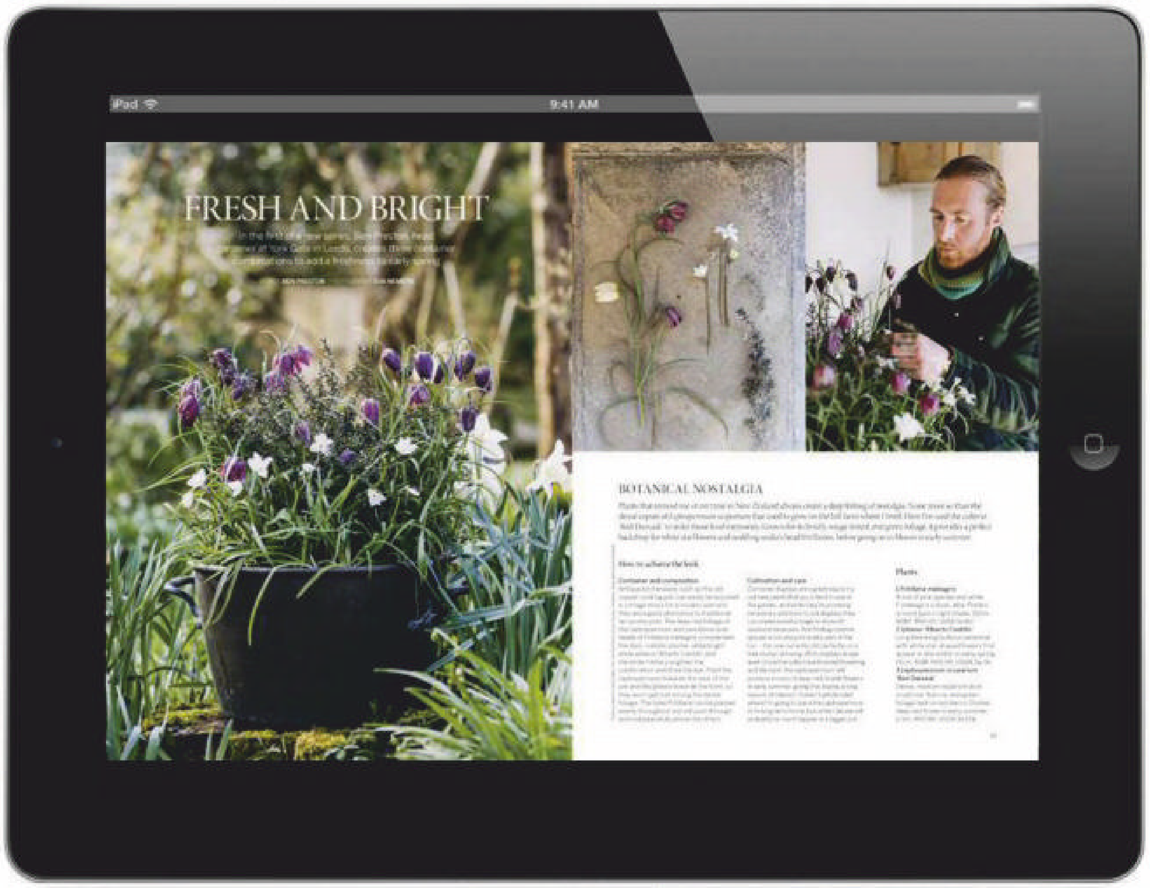
FORGET-ME-NOT FLOWERS


FRESH AND BRIGHT
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The Outsider

On the southern Japanese island of Yakushima, horticulturist Hannah Gardner, discovers mossy forests filled with hollow ancient tree stumps and an unusual evergreen shrub

WORDS HANNAH GARDNER ILLUSTRATION ALICE PATTULLO

Sugi is the national tree of Japan, commonly planted around shrines and temples but revered and cultivated in gardens throughout the temperate world. There is no better place to experience the majesty and ancestry of these singular conifers than the hauntingly beautiful, primeval rainforests of Yakushima, home to 1,900 plant species and hundreds of ancient *yakusugi* or Japanese cedar trees of at least 1,000 years old. Yakushima lies 38 miles south of sub tropical Kyushu, the most southerly of Japan's four main islands. The sugi (*Cryptomeria japonica*) tree is an endemic Japanese conifer with a high percentage of resin. The oily timber is pleasantly scented, lightweight, strong and highly desirable. Much of the island is now protected, the warm-temperate forest designated a Unesco World Heritage site in 1993, following an intense period of destructive logging in the early 20th century.

Inspiration for the trip

It was a grainy 1914 photograph of the great plant hunter Ernest Henry Wilson within the hollow remains of a giant 3,000-year-old sugi on Yakushima that inspired me to follow his footsteps into the forest.

When to go

Spring and late autumn are popular as temperatures are cooler and in April there is mountain cherry blossom. Avoid the rainy season, it's intense and runs from June to mid July. The humidity on Yakushima is high, with the mountains considerably cooler than the coast. It is always advisable to carry waterproofs if you are hiking.

Where to go

The interminable rains feed raging rivers that pound down the high mountains, carving through the dark, granite bedrock and acidic soils of the emerald forest to emerge in spectacular waterfalls. Shiratani Unsuikyo Ravine (600-1,000m) is a shady, fairy-tale valley shrouded in moist swirling mists and drenched in intrigue. Here you will find a moss forest where the filtered light is a surreal green. Annual rainfall of more than 8m is not uncommon here, and bryophytes and ferns dominate the forest floor, colonising boulders, tree trunks and cloaking sprawling root systems, the entire forest darkened by epiphytes and hanging swathes of dewy moss. The vertical ecosystems found on Yakushima extend from the introduced subtropical Chusan palms, Ponkan orange trees and wild *Lilium longiflorum* of the east coast up to montane temperate rainforests and sub-alpine moors amid the central peaks where the rare *Gentiana yakushimensis* clings on for dear life.

The footpaths that climb through these diverse, dense bands of vegetation are muddy, stony and steep. Extraordinary, venerated cedars with their second skin of moss and ferns grow alongside Japanese hemlock (*Tsuga sieboldii)* and momi fir (*Abies firma*) but it's not just conifers. At lower elevations, in dappled shade, the broadleaf evergreen laurel forests are full of interest, the lithe copper trunks of *Stewartia monadelpha* and *Lagerstroemia subcostata* var. *fauriei*, slink between broader-limbed trees. I spotted *Camellia sasanqua* and the drupes of *Callicarpa japonica* and wondered at *Daphniphyllum macropodum*, a distinctive and handsome shrub with crimson petioles attaching the leathery leaves in a whorl.

Passing along the Ohkabuhodo Trail near the centre of the island at an altitude of 1,100m you'll discover the remarkable Wilson's Stump. This hollowed stump, inside which Wilson was photographed in 1914, is that of a tree felled in 1586, its timber used to build a temple for the great Buddha statue at Hoko-ji temple in Kyoto. Carry on to reach Jomon Sugi the oldest and largest among the ancient trees. This bulbous and misshapen tree is hollow, and of very advanced but uncertain age (2,200-7,000 years), its girth a stout 16.4m.

If you are not for turning, an ambitious three-day traverse across the island's steep core leads on. There are a number of basic mountain shelters along the route that will take in Mt Miyanoura (1,936m), the southernmost location in Japan for snowfall. Beyond the last band of forest lies marshy open ground, the peat flecked with tiny alpine *Primula sieboldii* and low thickets of tough bamboo (*Pseudosasa owatarii*), graceful *Miscanthus* and *Rhododendron yakushimanum*, with deep-pink buds magically producing an abundance of blousy, pure-white flowers.

Plant to grow at home

If I had space for just one Japanese shrub it would be the evergreen *Illicium anisatum* (known as Japanese star anise or *shikimi*). It was introduced to England in 1790, but first seen by me outside a mountain hut in Yakushima. Upright and eye catching, it has dark, glossy leaves and clusters of unusual, many-petalled flowers the colour and texture of church candles. These appear in late spring. The seedheads look like star anise but are highly toxic. As both foliage and wood are strongly aromatic it is burned as incense in Japan. Plant in full sun or partial shade. It will tolerate acid or neutral soil as long as it is humus-rich and moist but well-drained. Select a sheltered spot away from cold winds, near a wall would be good. It is hardy to -5°C and beautiful near a gentle drift of the grass *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Yakushima Dwarf'. □

Guides

The Yakushima Guide by Clive Witham (Yakumonkey, Mangrove Press, 2017)

Wildflowers of Japan by Ran Levy (Kodansha International, 1995).

Where to stay

Cottage Morinokokage
292-9 Funayuki, Yakushima, Kumage District, Kagoshima 891-4312, Japan.
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- Hannah Gardner is leading our exclusive reader tour to explore Japan's hidden garden gems in September. See page 11 or visit gardensillustrated.com/events for details.

Fresh ideas

Building on a design by Tom Stuart-Smith, the blossoming talents of David Richter and Beth Marshall have made their mark on an Oxfordshire garden

WORDS **RORY DUSOIR** PHOTOGRAPHS **MARIANNE MAJERUS**

IN BRIEF

What A flower and vegetable garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith.
Where Oxfordshire.
Size A three-acre garden within a 57-acre estate, which also contains a four-acre wildflower meadow and extensive woodlands.
Soil Stony but fertile loam to varying depths above chalk.
Climate Somewhat exposed, but this is mitigated by the woodlands and by the construction of a walled garden.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

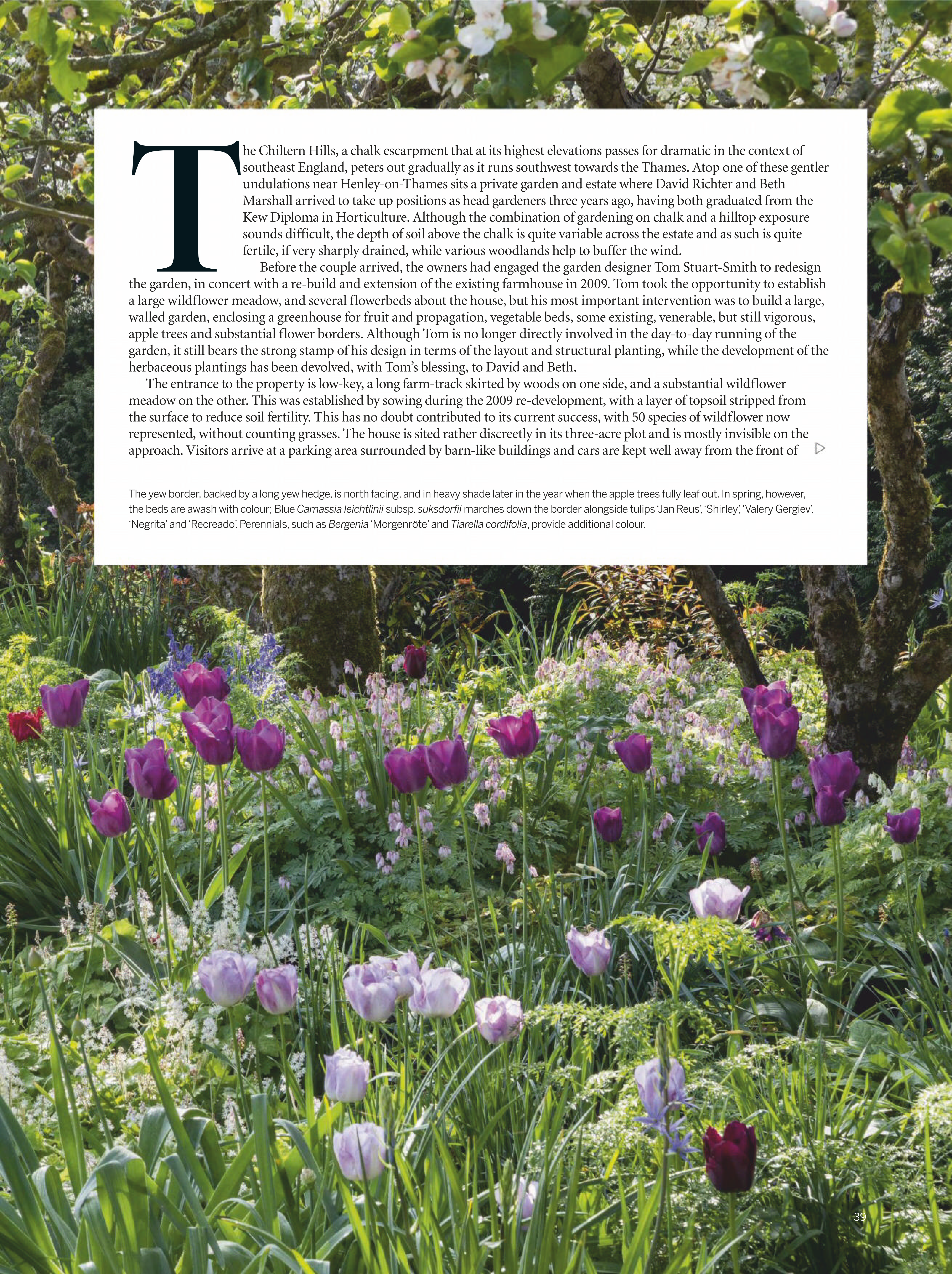
Planting in the walled garden, close to the entrance, is planned to harness the moment when the still-productive, old apple trees come into blossom. Box balls define a central bed overflowing with *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*, its lime green is repeated in clumps of *Helleborus argutifolius* and contrasts with the vivid colours of tulips 'Ballerina' and 'Abu Hassan'.

Drifts of camassia mingle through the yew border to great effect

The Chiltern Hills, a chalk escarpment that at its highest elevations passes for dramatic in the context of southeast England, peters out gradually as it runs southwest towards the Thames. Atop one of these gentler undulations near Henley-on-Thames sits a private garden and estate where David Richter and Beth Marshall arrived to take up positions as head gardeners three years ago, having both graduated from the Kew Diploma in Horticulture. Although the combination of gardening on chalk and a hilltop exposure sounds difficult, the depth of soil above the chalk is quite variable across the estate and as such is quite fertile, if very sharply drained, while various woodlands help to buffer the wind.

Before the couple arrived, the owners had engaged the garden designer Tom Stuart-Smith to redesign the garden, in concert with a re-build and extension of the existing farmhouse in 2009. Tom took the opportunity to establish a large wildflower meadow, and several flowerbeds about the house, but his most important intervention was to build a large, walled garden, enclosing a greenhouse for fruit and propagation, vegetable beds, some existing, venerable, but still vigorous, apple trees and substantial flower borders. Although Tom is no longer directly involved in the day-to-day running of the garden, it still bears the strong stamp of his design in terms of the layout and structural planting, while the development of the herbaceous plantings has been devolved, with Tom's blessing, to David and Beth.

The entrance to the property is low-key, a long farm-track skirted by woods on one side, and a substantial wildflower meadow on the other. This was established by sowing during the 2009 re-development, with a layer of topsoil stripped from the surface to reduce soil fertility. This has no doubt contributed to its current success, with 50 species of wildflower now represented, without counting grasses. The house is sited rather discreetly in its three-acre plot and is mostly invisible on the approach. Visitors arrive at a parking area surrounded by barn-like buildings and cars are kept well away from the front of



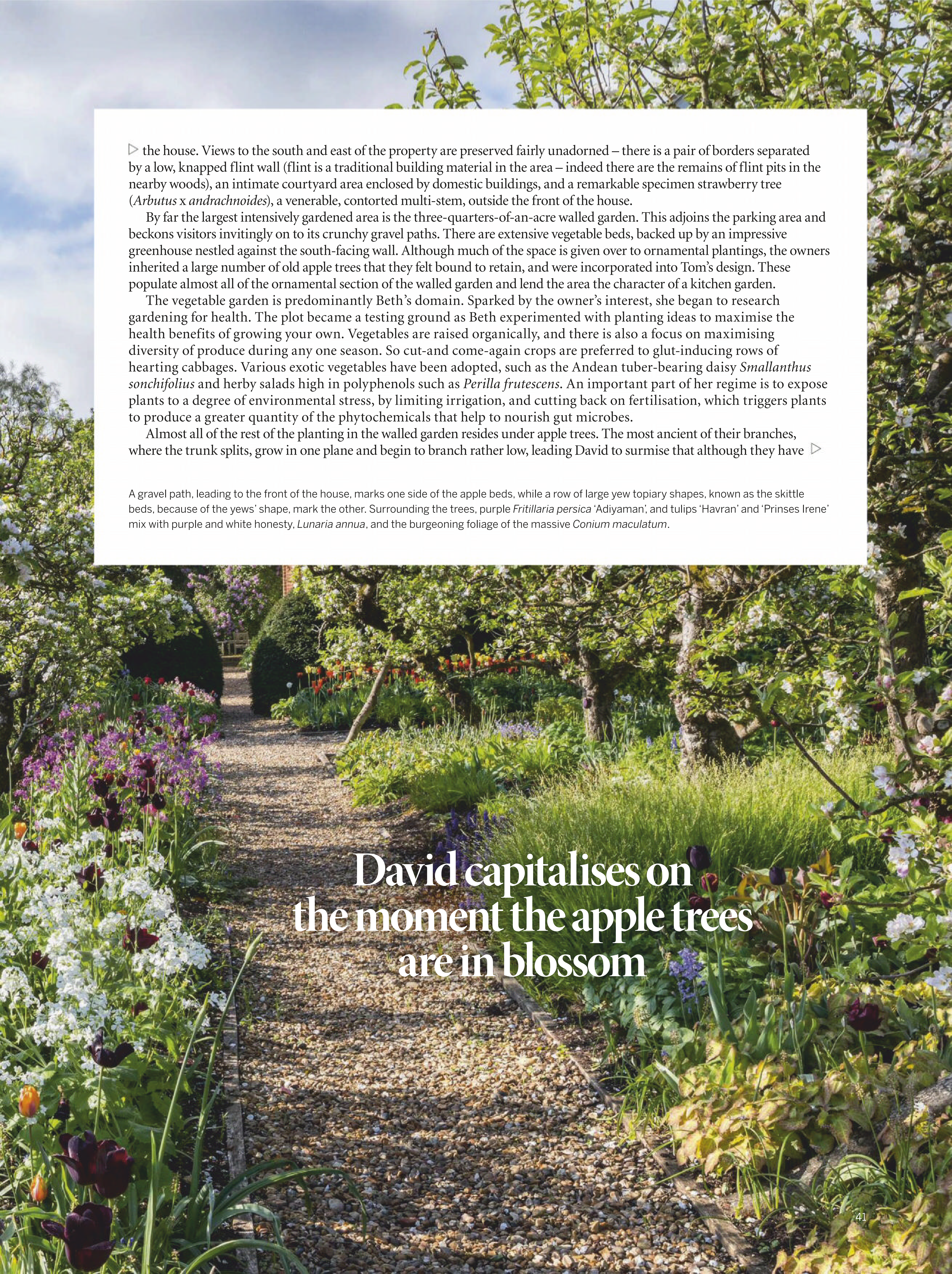
The yew border, backed by a long yew hedge, is north facing, and in heavy shade later in the year when the apple trees fully leaf out. In spring, however, the beds are awash with colour; Blue *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* marches down the border alongside tulips 'Jan Reus', 'Shirley', 'Valery Gergiev', 'Negrita' and 'Recreado'. Perennials, such as *Bergenia* 'Morgenröte' and *Tiarella cordifolia*, provide additional colour.

▷ the house. Views to the south and east of the property are preserved fairly unadorned – there is a pair of borders separated by a low, knapped flint wall (flint is a traditional building material in the area – indeed there are the remains of flint pits in the nearby woods), an intimate courtyard area enclosed by domestic buildings, and a remarkable specimen strawberry tree (*Arbutus* x *andrachnoides*), a venerable, contorted multi-stem, outside the front of the house.

By far the largest intensively gardened area is the three-quarters-of-an-acre walled garden. This adjoins the parking area and beckons visitors invitingly on to its crunchy gravel paths. There are extensive vegetable beds, backed up by an impressive greenhouse nestled against the south-facing wall. Although much of the space is given over to ornamental plantings, the owners inherited a large number of old apple trees that they felt bound to retain, and were incorporated into Tom's design. These populate almost all of the ornamental section of the walled garden and lend the area the character of a kitchen garden.

The vegetable garden is predominantly Beth's domain. Sparked by the owner's interest, she began to research gardening for health. The plot became a testing ground as Beth experimented with planting ideas to maximise the health benefits of growing your own. Vegetables are raised organically, and there is also a focus on maximising diversity of produce during any one season. So cut-and come-again crops are preferred to glut-inducing rows of hearting cabbages. Various exotic vegetables have been adopted, such as the Andean tuber-bearing daisy *Smallanthus sonchifolius* and herby salads high in polyphenols such as *Perilla frutescens*. An important part of her regime is to expose plants to a degree of environmental stress, by limiting irrigation, and cutting back on fertilisation, which triggers plants to produce a greater quantity of the phytochemicals that help to nourish gut microbes.

Almost all of the rest of the planting in the walled garden resides under apple trees. The most ancient of their branches, where the trunk splits, grow in one plane and begin to branch rather low, leading David to surmise that although they have ▷



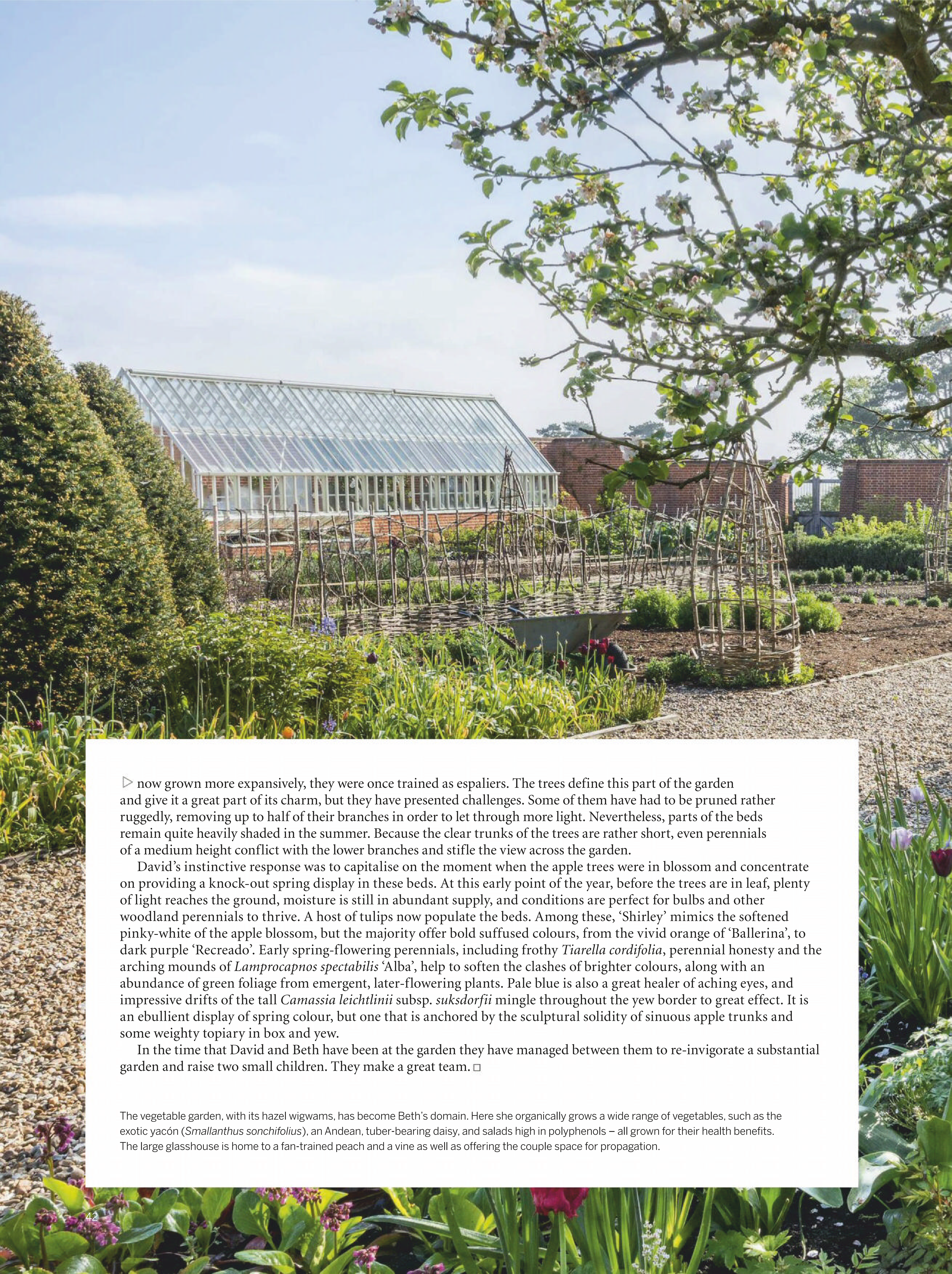
A gravel path, leading to the front of the house, marks one side of the apple beds, while a row of large yew topiary shapes, known as the skittle beds, because of the yews' shape, mark the other. Surrounding the trees, purple *Fritillaria persica* 'Adiyaman', and tulips 'Havran' and 'Prinses Irene' mix with purple and white honesty, *Lunaria annua*, and the burgeoning foliage of the massive *Conium maculatum*.

David capitalises on the moment the apple trees are in blossom

▷ now grown more expansively, they were once trained as espaliers. The trees define this part of the garden and give it a great part of its charm, but they have presented challenges. Some of them have had to be pruned rather ruggedly, removing up to half of their branches in order to let through more light. Nevertheless, parts of the beds remain quite heavily shaded in the summer. Because the clear trunks of the trees are rather short, even perennials of a medium height conflict with the lower branches and stifle the view across the garden.

David's instinctive response was to capitalise on the moment when the apple trees were in blossom and concentrate on providing a knock-out spring display in these beds. At this early point of the year, before the trees are in leaf, plenty of light reaches the ground, moisture is still in abundant supply, and conditions are perfect for bulbs and other woodland perennials to thrive. A host of tulips now populate the beds. Among these, 'Shirley' mimics the softened pinky-white of the apple blossom, but the majority offer bold suffused colours, from the vivid orange of 'Ballerina', to dark purple 'Recreado'. Early spring-flowering perennials, including frothy *Tiarella cordifolia*, perennial honesty and the arching mounds of *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* 'Alba', help to soften the clashes of brighter colours, along with an abundance of green foliage from emergent, later-flowering plants. Pale blue is also a great healer of aching eyes, and impressive drifts of the tall *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* mingle throughout the yew border to great effect. It is an ebullient display of spring colour, but one that is anchored by the sculptural solidity of sinuous apple trunks and some weighty topiary in box and yew.

In the time that David and Beth have been at the garden they have managed between them to re-invigorate a substantial garden and raise two small children. They make a great team. □



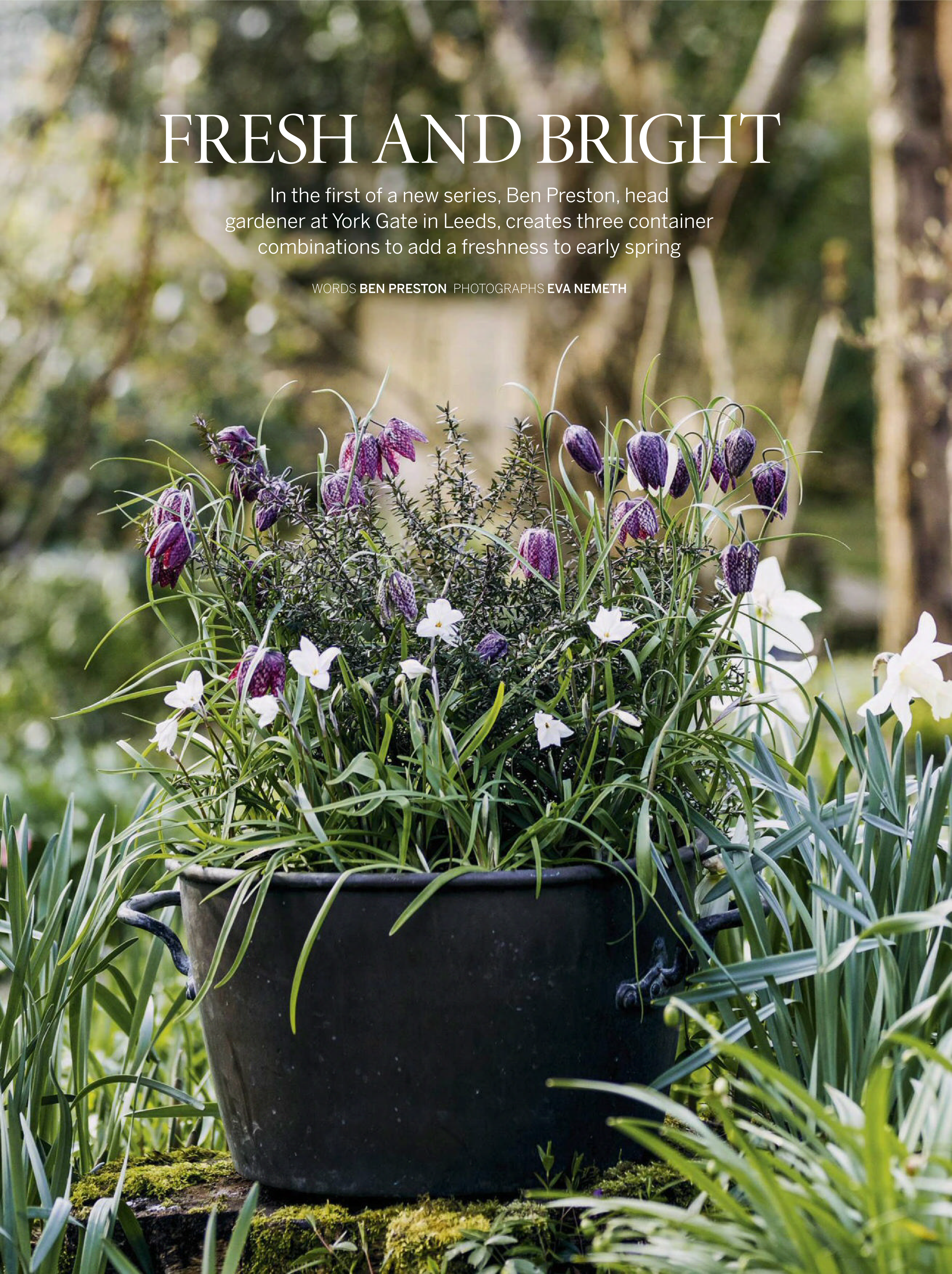
The vegetable garden, with its hazel wigwams, has become Beth's domain. Here she organically grows a wide range of vegetables, such as the exotic yacón (*Smallanthus sonchifolius*), an Andean, tuber-bearing daisy, and salads high in polyphenols – all grown for their health benefits. The large glasshouse is home to a fan-trained peach and a vine as well as offering the couple space for propagation.

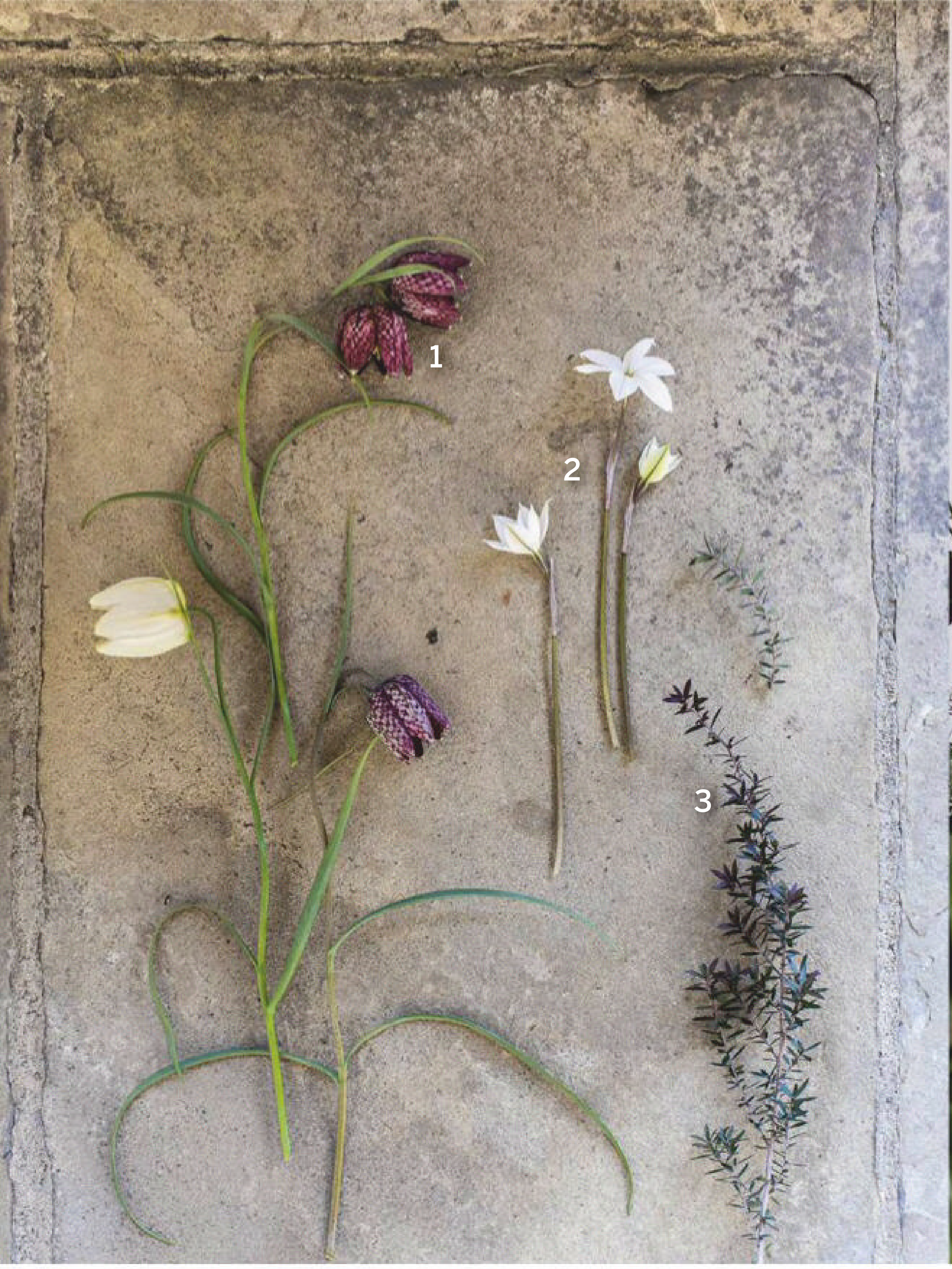
By far the largest area is the walled garden, beckoning visitors on to its gravel paths

FRESH AND BRIGHT

In the first of a new series, Ben Preston, head gardener at York Gate in Leeds, creates three container combinations to add a freshness to early spring

WORDS **BEN PRESTON** PHOTOGRAPHS **EVA NEMETH**





BOTANICAL NOSTALGIA

Plants that remind me of my time in New Zealand always create a deep feeling of nostalgia. None more so than the dense copses of *Leptospermum scoparium* that used to grow on the hill farm where I lived. Here I've used the cultivar 'Red Damask' to stoke those fond memories. Grown for its bristly, rouge-tinted, evergreen foliage, it provides a perfect backdrop for white starflowers and nodding snake's head fritillaries, before going on to bloom in early summer.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition

Antique kitchenware, such as this old copper cooking pot, can easily be acquired in vintage shops for a modest sum and they are a good alternative to traditional terracotta pots. The deep-red foliage of the *Leptospermum* and pendulous pink heads of *Fritillaria meleagris* complement the dark, metallic planter, while bright white *Ipheion* 'Alberto Castillo' and the white fritillary brighten the combination and draw the eye. Plant the *Leptospermum* towards the back of the pot and the *Ipheion* towards the front, so they won't get lost among the dense foliage. The taller *Fritillaria* can be planted evenly throughout and will push through and nod peacefully above the others.

Cultivation and care

Container displays are a great way to try out new plants that you intend to use in the garden, and while they're providing temporary additions to pot displays they can create a useful stage to show off seasonal treasures. And finding creative spaces to situate pots is also part of the fun – this one currently sits perfectly on a tree stump, showing off its displays at eye level. Once the bulbs have finished flowering and die back, the *Leptospermum* will produce a mass of deep-red double flowers in early summer, giving this display a long season of interest. I haven't yet decided where I'm going to place the *Leptospermum* in its long-term home, but while I decide it will probably be much happier in a bigger pot.

Plants

1 *Fritillaria meleagris*
A mix of pink species and white *F. meleagris* subvar. *alba*. Prefers a moist spot in light shade. 30cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b†.

2 *Ipheion* 'Alberto Castillo'
Long blooming bulbous perennial with white star-shaped flowers that appear in late winter to early spring. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

3 *Leptospermum scoparium* 'Red Damask'
Dense, medium-sized shrub or small tree. Narrow, evergreen foliage held on red stems. Double, deep-red flower in early summer. 2.5m. RHS H4, USDA 9a-10b.

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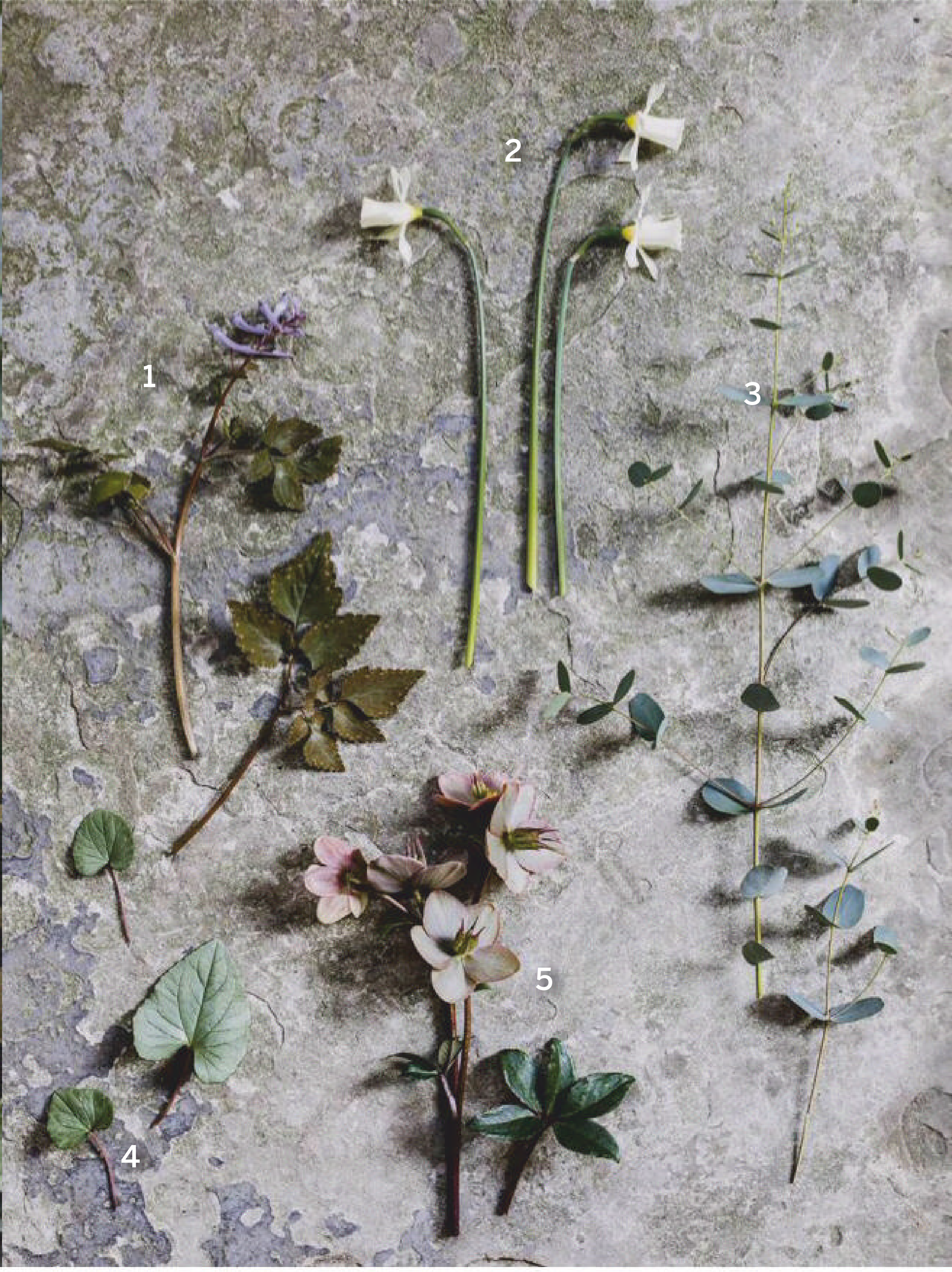
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



PASTEL SHADES AND SHAPES

For this display the shape and textures of the foliage were planned before the flower and colour combinations. All five plants add something different, from the low-growing, arrow-shaped leaves of *Cyclamen hederifolium* Silver-leaved Group to the towering *Eucalyptus gunnii*, while *Corydalis temulifolia* 'Chocolate Stars' takes on many forms, unfurling in January, then as the season warms its leaflets extend and fade to green, before a mass of violet flowers break in late March.

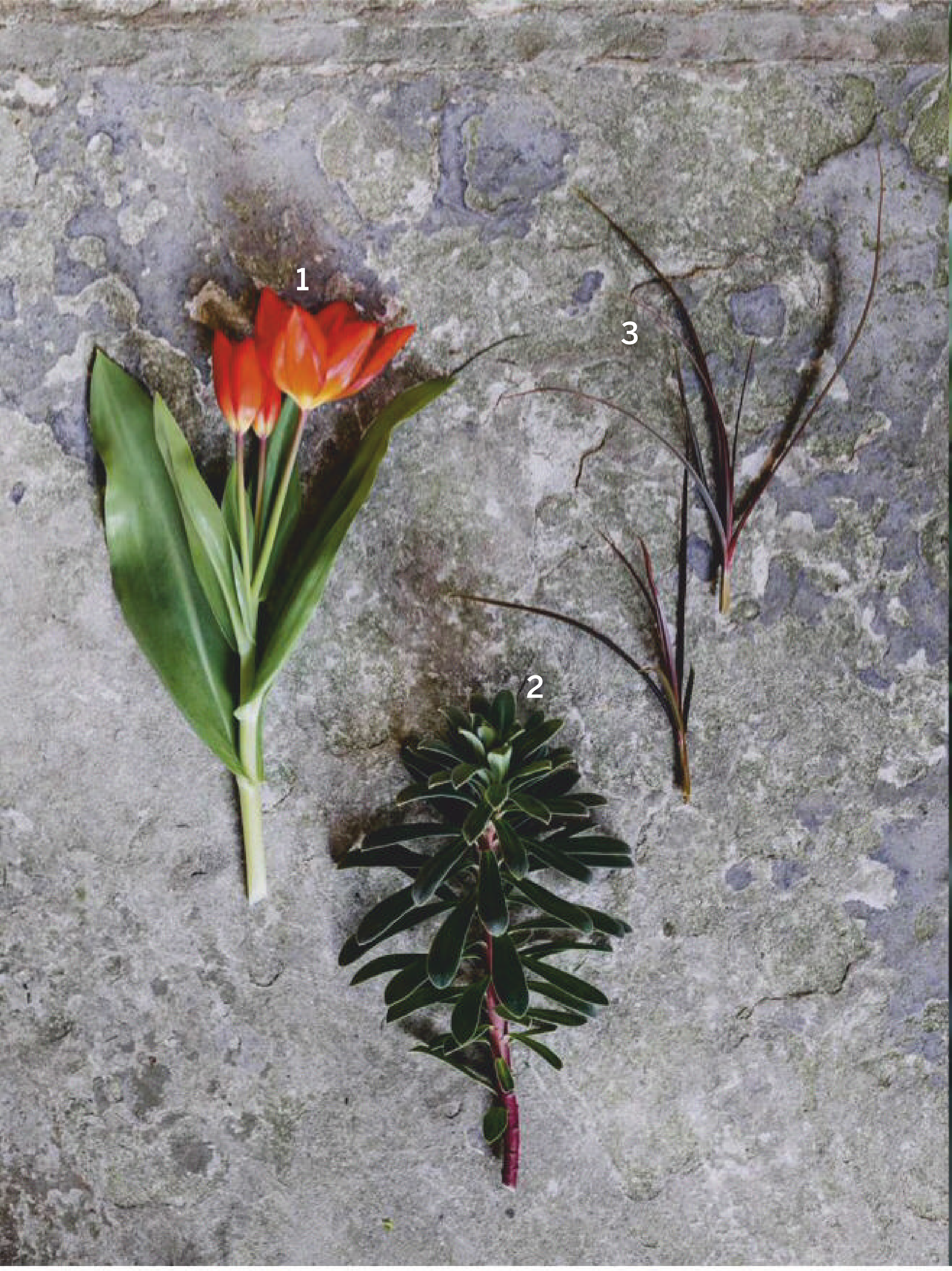
How to achieve the look

Container and composition
The subtle blue tones of this aged, copper water tank draw this composition together, complementing the silver foliage of the cyclamen and eucalyptus that provide a framework through which you can weave other plants. Using the eucalyptus as the centrepiece here adds an element of height to the tiered effect of this display. The pink saucers of *Helleborus* x *nigercors* 'Emma', which age to white, rest above the caramel fern-like froth of the corydalis, while its dark, glossy foliage contrasts with that of the silver-leaved cyclamen. Finally, the lemon trumpets of early flowering of *Narcissus* 'Elka' float through the combination, highlighting the end of winter and beginning of spring.

Cultivation and care
Eucalyptus gunnii must be coppiced or pollarded to maintain the juvenile elliptic foliage that elongates as it matures. Every other spring, we cut ours right down to maintain its form and control its height; it would grow into a large specimen if left untouched. Clipping stems throughout the year for flower arranging makes it such a useful plant. All pots work better with advanced planning, but edits can always be made later to add a little extra something. I couldn't decide between the white *Narcissus* 'Thalia' and the subtle lemon of 'Elka'. I picked the latter purely for its early arrival, but potting up some spare bulbs in the autumn means you can become even more creative come spring.

Plants

1 *Corydalis temulifolia* 'Chocolate Stars'
Unusual, chocolate-coloured, fern-like foliage topped with lilac tubular flowers. 40cm. RHS H5.
2 *Narcissus* 'Elka'
Delicate, lemon-yellow trumpets that fade to white. 25cm. AGM. RHS H6.
3 *Eucalyptus gunnii*
Silver-leafed, evergreen tree. 18m. AGM. RHS H5.
4 *Cyclamen hederifolium* Silver-leaved Group
Tuberous perennial that provides good groundcover. 10cm. RHS H5.
5 *Helleborus* x *nigercors* 'Emma'
Large, white flowers with a pink flush. 25cm. RHS H7.



RECLAIMED ANTIQUITY

Drawing inspiration from seasonal garden favourites and condensing ideas into containers is both creative and playful. *Tulipa praestans* 'Fusilier' signifies the end of winter and the anticipation of warmer days of spring. Here I've combined their neat, cup-shaped, vivid-red blooms with the tactile, narrow-leaved, claret sedge, *Uncinia rubra*, and the soft, glaucous foliage of *Euphorbia characias* 'Portuguese Velvet', which offers a wonderful contrast to the tulips' ruby tones.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
This sturdy wooden planter, made from reclaimed scaffolding boards, is an idea I borrowed from The Walled Garden nursery in Kent. It is both simple and inexpensive (I picked up the board for less than £5) to make, and you can dictate the length and width by cutting the boards to the required size and screwing together. Rubbing a little dirt into the depressions where the screws entered gives the box a rustic look, disguising the recent modifications. Even the old dab of orange paint on the metal trim ties in with the boisterous tulip, a complete coincidence, but one I enjoy. Remember to allow enough drainage when constructing your own planter, I drilled a series of holes on the underside to prevent waterlogging.

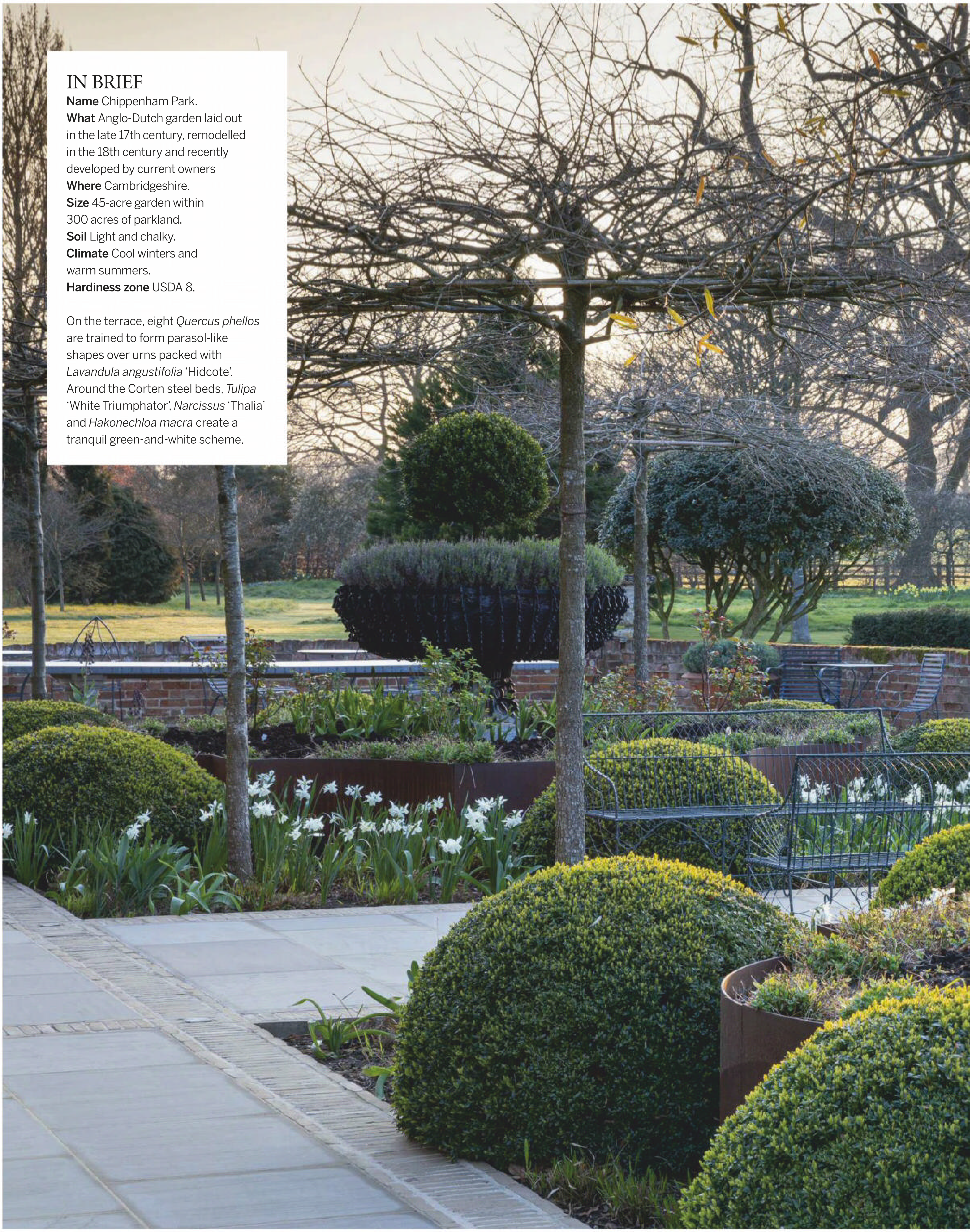
Cultivation and care
Ideally, you should add spring bulbs into your container, at roughly three times the depth of the bulb, in the autumn, but tulips are quite happy to be moved and replanted if there is minimal root disturbance. Carefully, wash off the roots under slow running water to separate individual bulbs from a lifted clump, then, carefully sink them into your desired spot. For this display, place the euphorbias first, making sure they are equally spaced (I used three), then surround these with around four times as many tulips planted randomly so it doesn't look too formal. Finally, you can tuck the sedge into the front edge. Both the euphorbia and sedge have evergreen foliage providing winter interest before the tulips pop in March.

Plants

1 *Tulipa praestans* 'Fusilier'
A short, multi-headed species cultivar, which has intense red flowers in March. 20-30cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

2 *Euphorbia characias* 'Portuguese Velvet'
A compact cultivar, with soft, downy, glaucous foliage. Its flowers are an intense, chartreuse green and are borne above the foliage in early spring to early summer. 60cm. RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.

3 *Uncinia rubra*
Clump-forming, red-leaved sedge. Evergreen foliage and dark-brown to black flower spikes in summer. 30cm. RHS H3.



IN BRIEF

Name Chippenham Park.
What Anglo-Dutch garden laid out in the late 17th century, remodelled in the 18th century and recently developed by current owners
Where Cambridgeshire.
Size 45-acre garden within 300 acres of parkland.
Soil Light and chalky.
Climate Cool winters and warm summers.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

On the terrace, eight *Quercus phellos* are trained to form parasol-like shapes over urns packed with *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote'. Around the Corten steel beds, *Tulipa* 'White Triumphator', *Narcissus* 'Thalia' and *Hakonechloa macra* create a tranquil green-and-white scheme.

In balance

At Chippenham Park in Cambridgeshire spring brings a multitude of naturalised bulbs to balance its rich layers of history

WORDS **TILLY WARE** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS**

In March the lawns between the house and the lake are filled with daffodils, including *Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus*, *N.* 'Actaea', *N.* 'February Gold' and *N. lobularis*, which are suited to naturalising in grass. The arches beyond are covered in wisteria and *Akebia quinata*.

A canal garden feels entirely right in the wide Fens of Cambridgeshire, although only traces of Chippenham Park's original 17th-century waterways remain. The Anglo-Dutch garden started off in 1609 with formal canals cross-hatching a park crammed with grand avenues. By the late 18th century, landscape designer William Emes and Samuel Lapidge, surveyor to 'Capability' Brown, had swept away the straight lines. Water was channelled into a great lake, whose serpentine curve is now thickly bordered with specimen trees and shrubs. If you cross the bridge and duck past the centuries-old chestnuts with skirts that sweep the floor, you'll find ghostly canal beds still lingering among ancient tunnels of box and yew. Their bones are covered in vast shrouds of snowdrops, aconites and narcissi. The atmosphere is magic.

Nine years ago, when they inherited the estate, it became the turn of Hugo and Becca Nicolle to make their mark. "People kept saying to me 'you're a garden designer: you must be dying to get your hands on it'," remembers Hugo. "But we didn't want to redesign, just to tweak and pull it together." Becca's mother had already transformed the four-acre walled garden in 2000 into an architectural expanse of beech hedging, pleached avenues and grass. It is a bold and unexpected use of space: an enormous colonnade of x *Cuprocyparis leylandii* arches across one quadrant, like a washing line strung with giant's breeches; pleached *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' forms a wall of early blossom.

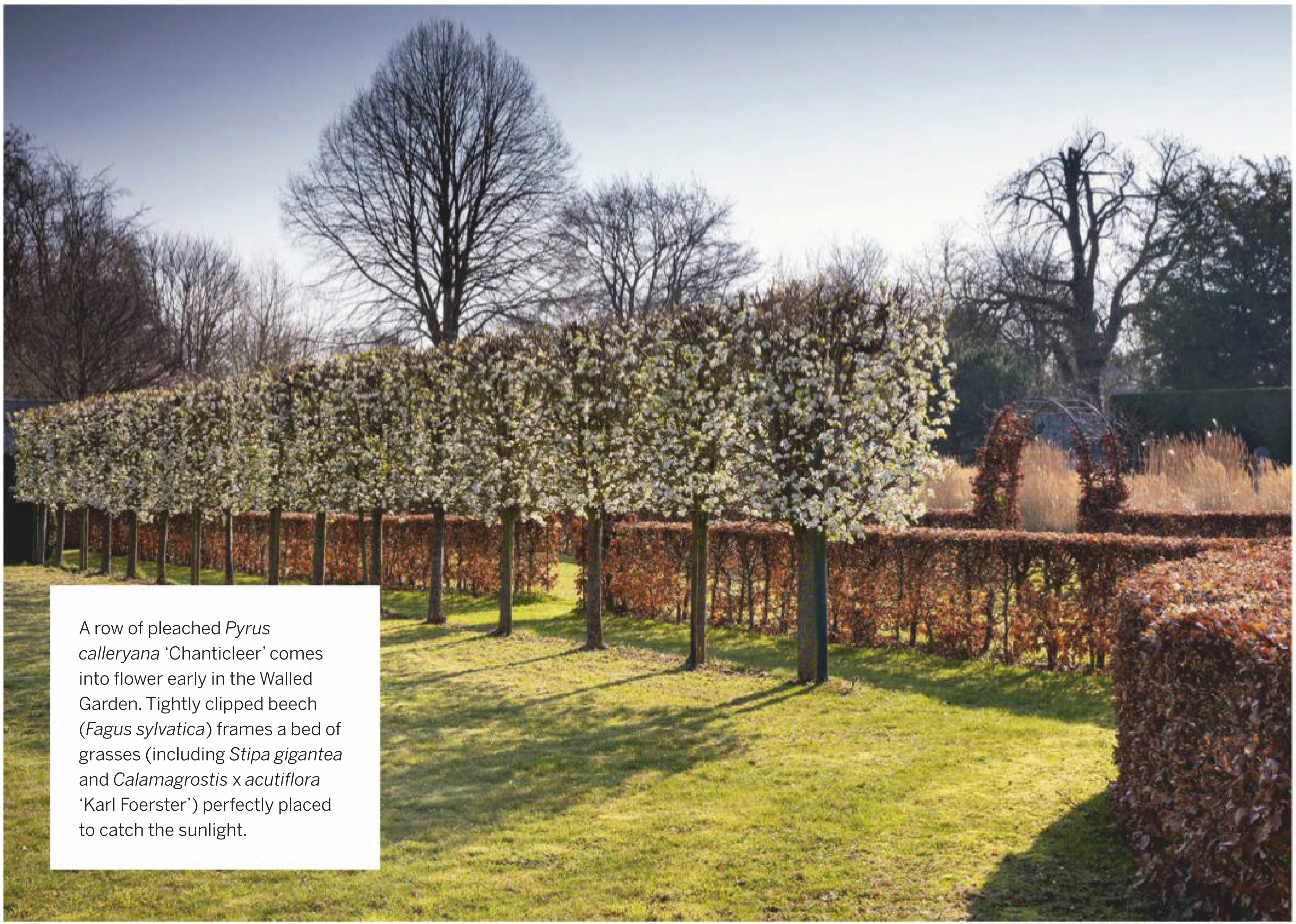
Chippenham Park shines brightest in spring, when the multitudes of undisturbed, naturalised bulbs are at their most bewitching. With this in mind, the Nicolles designed a winter walk around the foot of the lake swooning with scented daphnes, sarcococcas, mahonias and viburnums. The light, chalky soil suits the swathes of *Iris reticulata*, including *Iris* 'Blue Note', *I.* 'Pixie' and *I.* 'Alida' that are scattered among Harvington hybrid hellebores. Dark evergreens, such as *Ilex aquifolium* 'Myrtifolia' and the gloriously heady *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' are balanced by creamy *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata' and golden-tipped *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata'. Further light is brought in by glowing ribbons of *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* 'Grayswood Ghost'. You can sit and gaze quietly on all this from a tiny wooden boathouse teetering at the water's edge.

At the end of the walk, a series of arches lead you across the lawns up to the main house. Hugo recently added a symmetrical, square brick terrace at the front, with Corten steel beds designed in a cinquefoil shape to mirror the Dutch gabled roof. Box balls and airy *Hakonechloa macra* nestle beneath willow-leaved oaks, *Quercus phellos*, whose dappled shade ripples across *Erigeron karvinskianus*, *Tulipa* 'White Triumphator' and *Narcissus* 'Thalia'. The next plan is a Delftware scene of clear-blue *Scilla sibirica* underneath a glade of snowy *Amelanchier* x *lamarckii*, as well as further plantings of camassias in ethereal colours. It is a skilful balancing act at Chippenham Park, introducing fresh ideas into a richly layered garden without breaking its spell. □

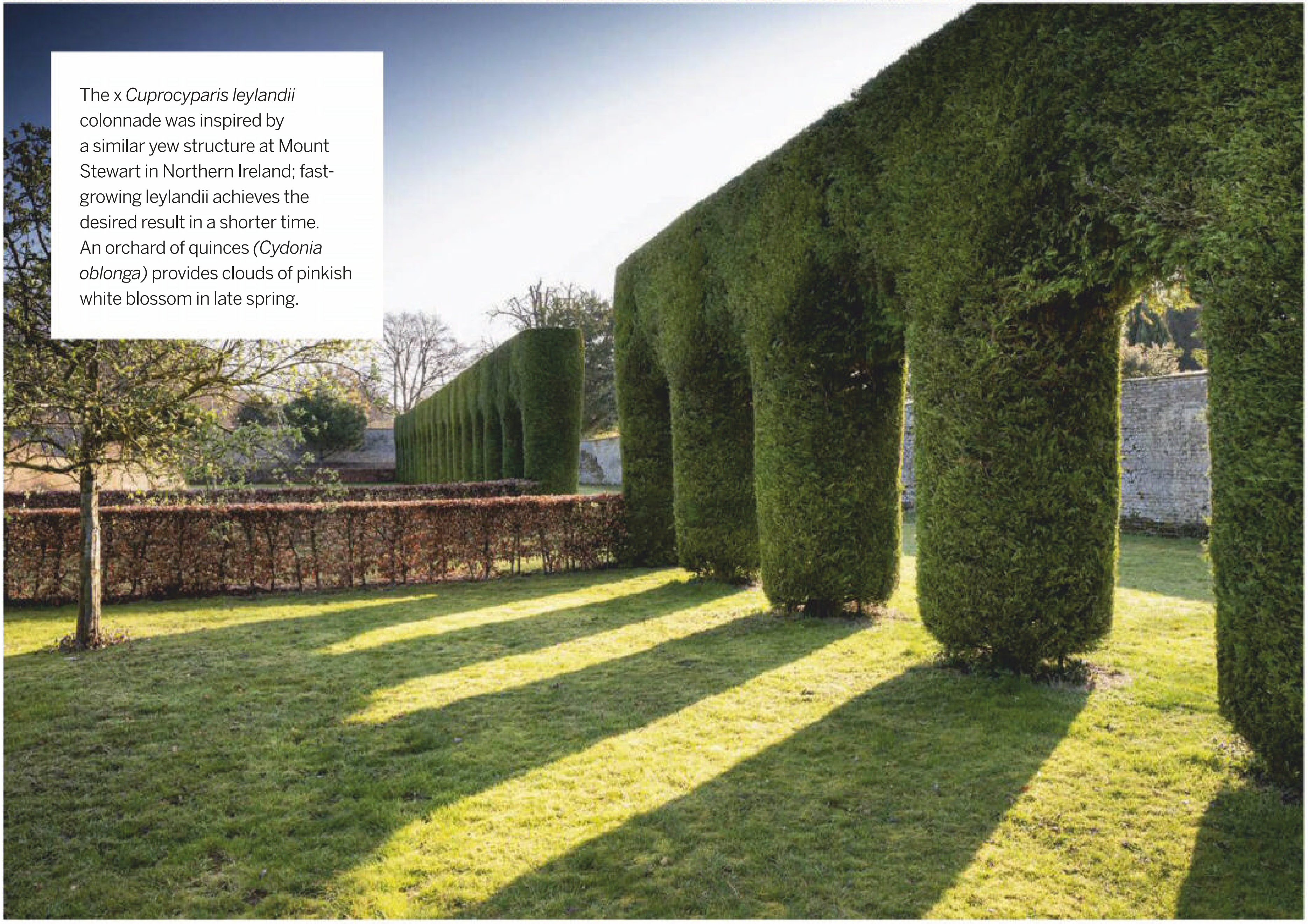
USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Chippenham Park, Newmarket, Cambridgeshire CB7 5PT. **Tel** 01638 721416. **Web** chippenhamparkgardens.info
Open For daffodils 1-22 March, 10am-4pm, and at various other dates throughout the year, see website for details. Admission £5.

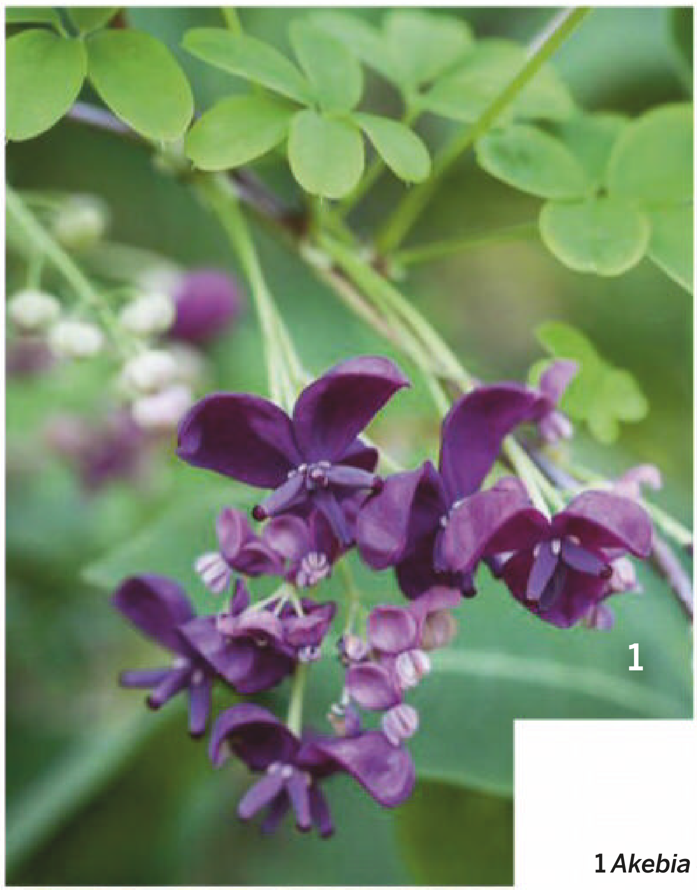
Turn the page for 16 key plants from Chippenham Park ▷



A row of pleached *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' comes into flower early in the Walled Garden. Tightly clipped beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) frames a bed of grasses (including *Stipa gigantea* and *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster') perfectly placed to catch the sunlight.



The x *Cuprocyparis leylandii* colonnade was inspired by a similar yew structure at Mount Stewart in Northern Ireland; fast-growing leylandii achieves the desired result in a shorter time. An orchard of quinces *(Cydonia oblonga)* provides clouds of pinkish white blossom in late spring.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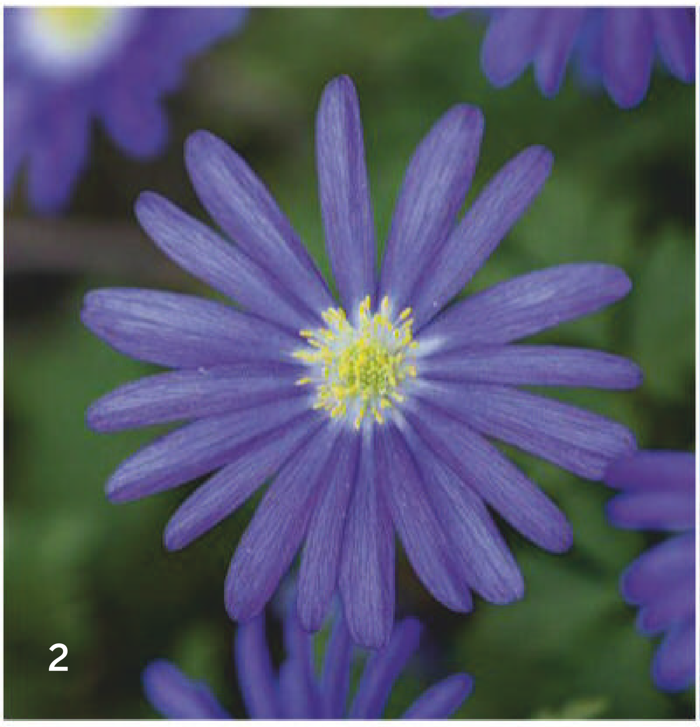
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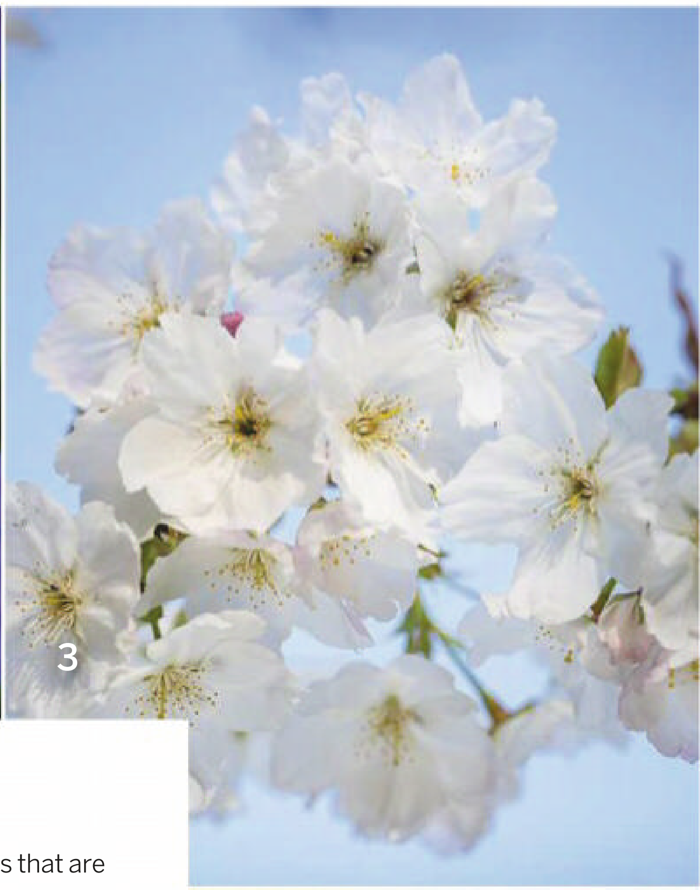
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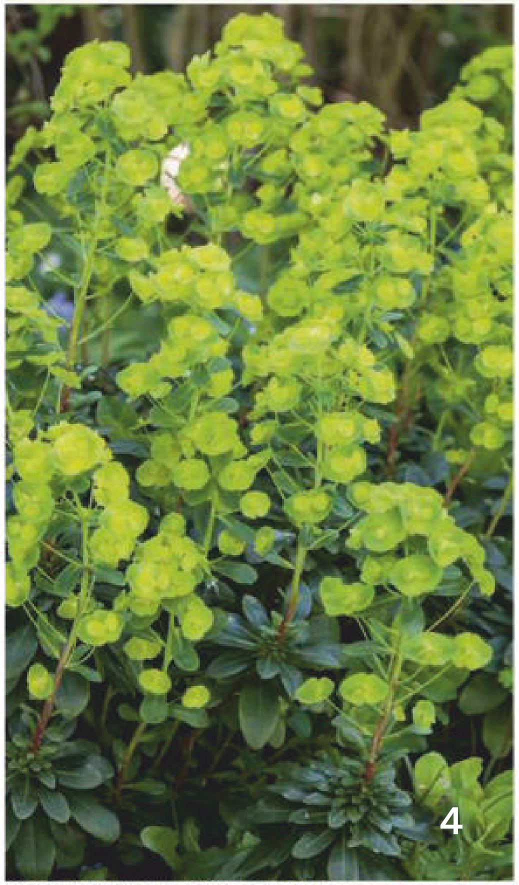
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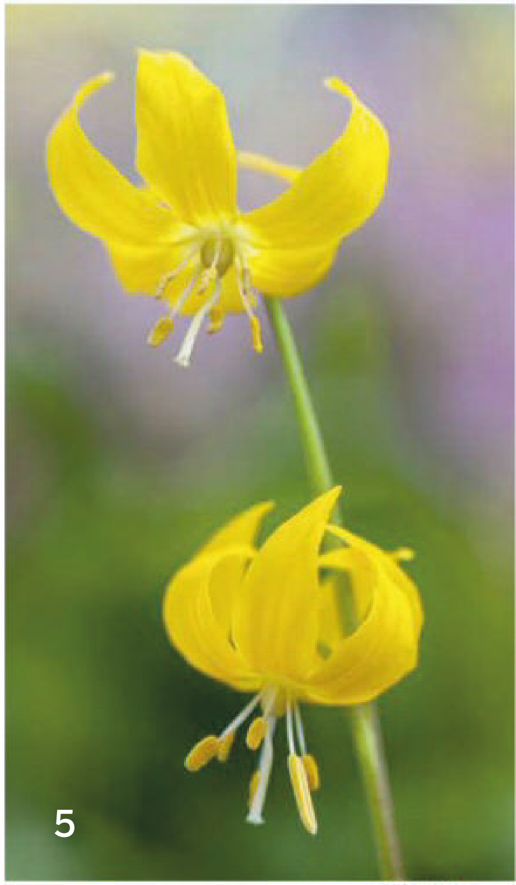
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16 KEY PLANTS

1 *Akebia quinata* A semi-evergreen climber with vanilla-scented flowers that are the rich violet of a vintage Bordeaux. Growth can be pruned after flowering. Prefers a sunny, sheltered spot. 10m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b†.

2 *Anemone blanda* Thrives in Chippenham Park's well-drained, deciduous woodlands, where it can seed about undisturbed and flower freely in sun before the trees burst into leaf. Daisy-like flowers appear March to April. 15cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

3 *Prunus* 'Tai-haku' A stunning Japanese cultivar with serrated foliage that emerges saucer-shaped and a reddish bronze. It has pure-white flowers that are double the typical size of cherry blossom. Plant in full sun with lots of room. 8m. AGM. RHS H6.

4 *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae* Glossy foliage provides excellent shady groundcover, and the lime-green bracts sing out in early spring, lighting up a back wall or dark corner. Glorious with an evergreen fern, such as *Asplenium scolopendrium,* or the furry fiddlenecks of *Dryopteris wallichiana*. 70cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-8b.

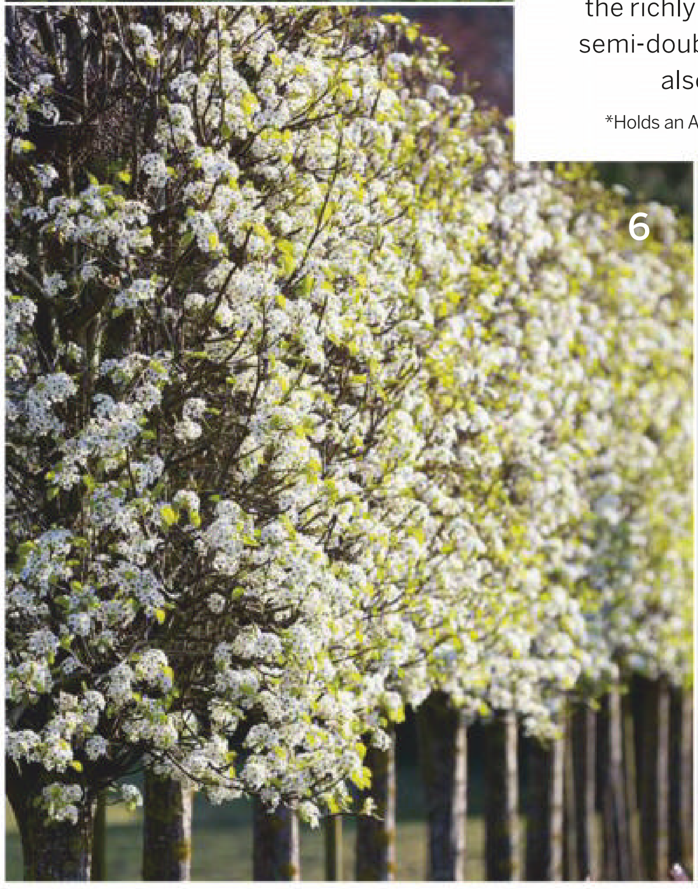
5 *Erythronium* 'Pagoda' One of the tallest and most prolific dog's tooth violets, often with five to seven, sulphur-coloured, recurved flowers. Foliage is lush green, mottled with brown. Interweave it with *Corydalis flexuosa* 'Blue Panda' to form a soft spring tapestry. 35cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

6 *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' Its tightly branched, slender conical shape makes this ornamental pear perfect as a specimen tree or as an elegant pleached avenue. Abundant white blossom in March. 15m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

7 *Narcissus* 'Thalia' An old cultivar with an elegance and refinement that few modern hybrids achieve. The flowers, two or three per stem, are the pure, greenish-white of snowdrops and highly fragrant. Excellent naturaliser. 40cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

8 *Prunus* 'Accolade' Outstanding hybrid of the early flowering *P.* x *subhirtella* and the richly coloured *P. sargentii*, combining the best of both parents: pure pink, semi-double flowers that are among the first and most prolific to blossom, and also offers vivid autumn foliage. 8m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.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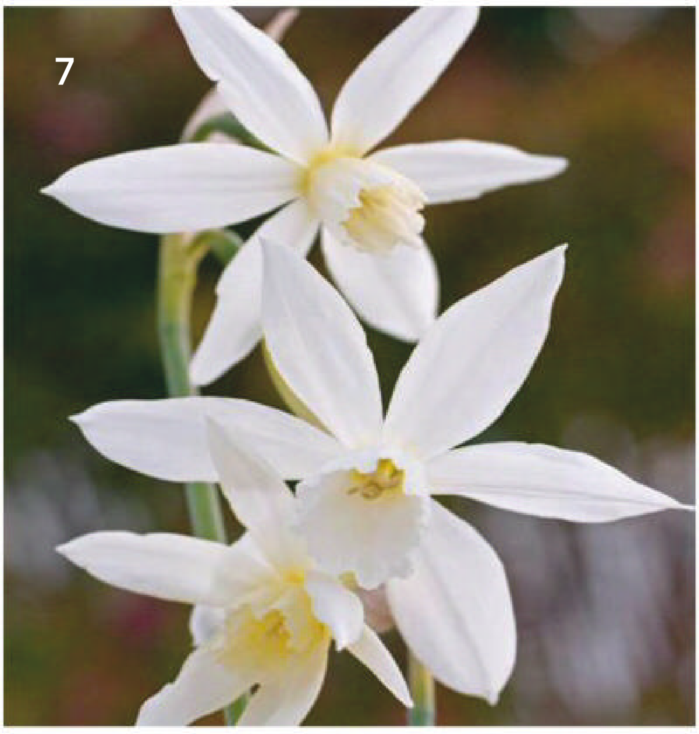
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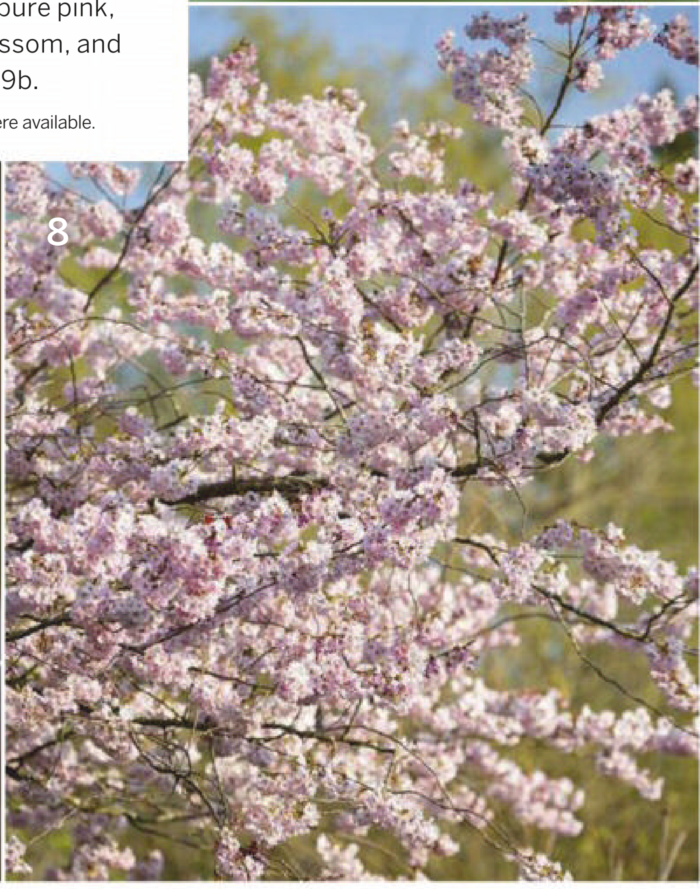
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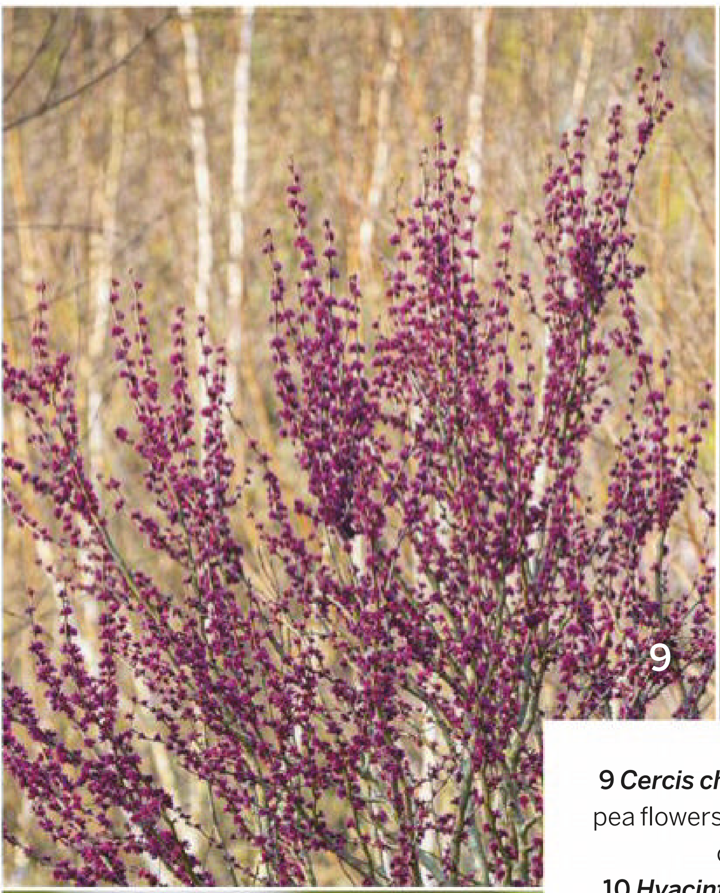
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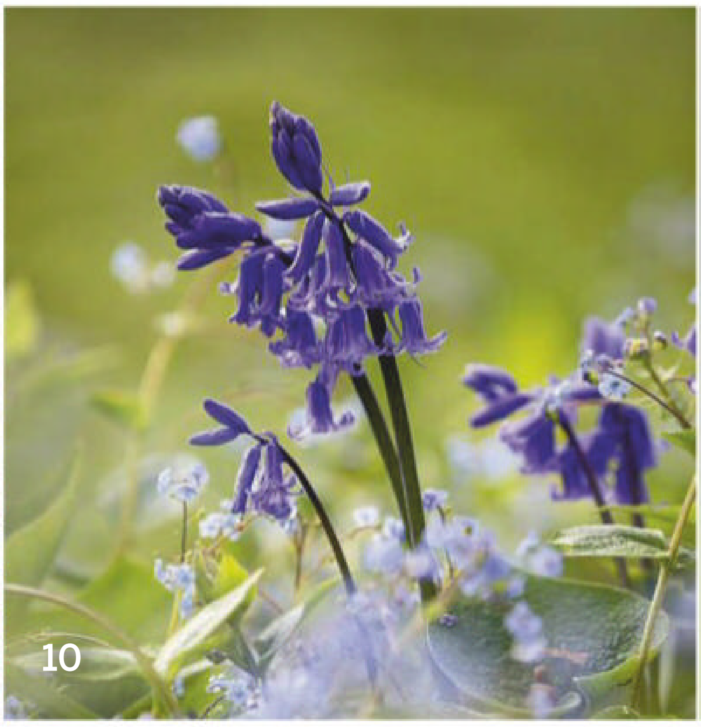
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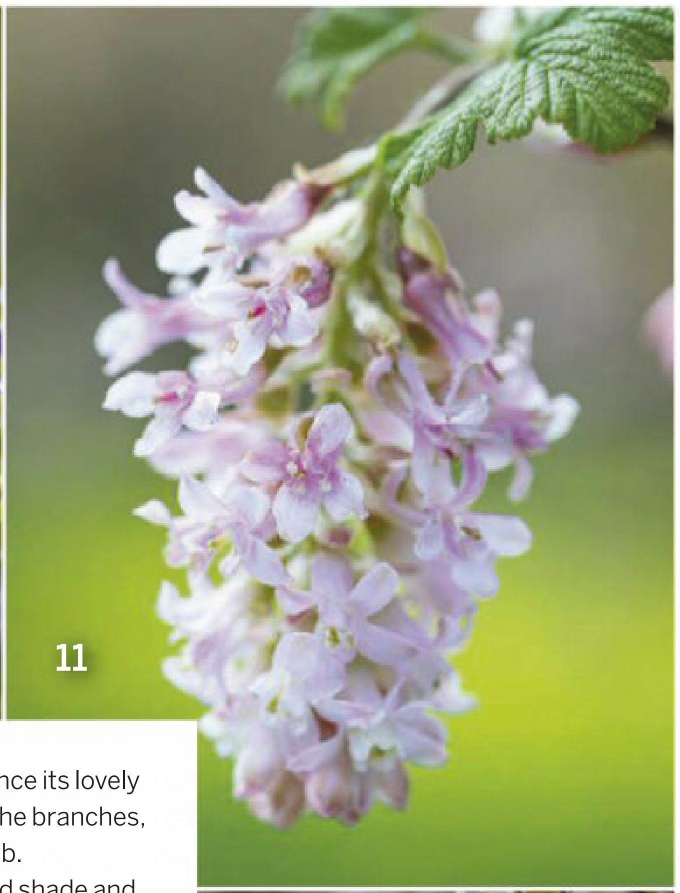
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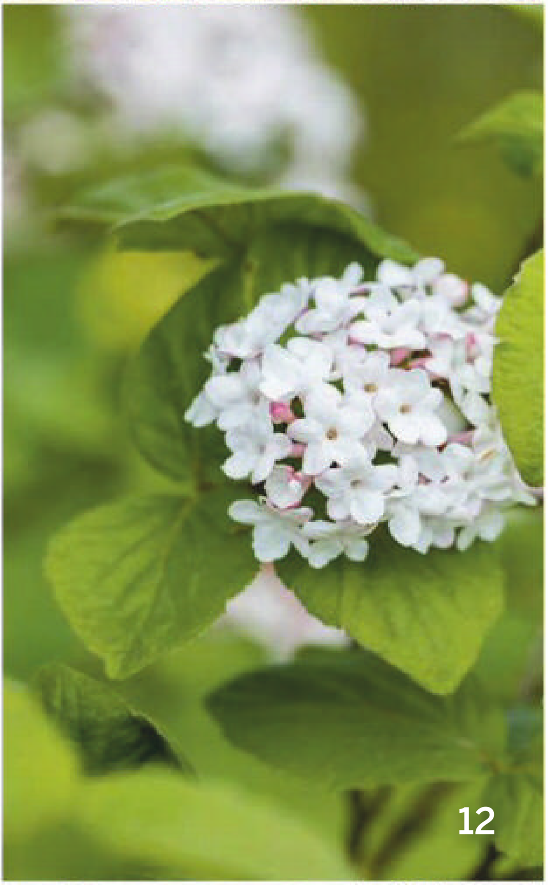
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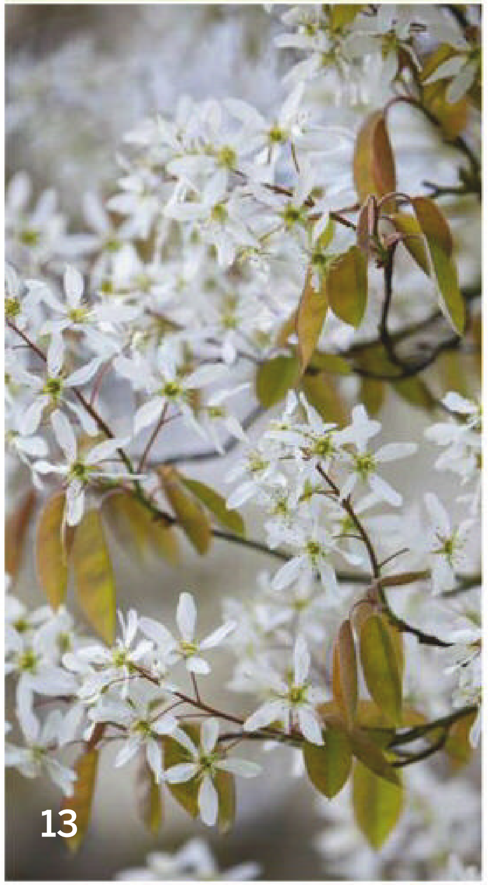
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9 ***Cercis chinensis*** **'Avondale'** A member of the Leguminosae family, hence its lovely pea flowers. This New Zealand selection has deep-violet buds crowding the branches, opening into magenta blooms. 3m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

10 ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta*** The English bluebell thrives in the dappled shade and humus-rich soil of Chippenham Park's ancient woods. It will take over in borders and the vivid violet-blue colour fades in full sun. 40cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

11 ***Ribes sanguineum*** **'Poky's Pink'** A particularly vigorous flowering currant with racemes of pale-pink tubular flowers and lobed leaves. Needs full sun and a hard prune after flowering. 1.8m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-10b.

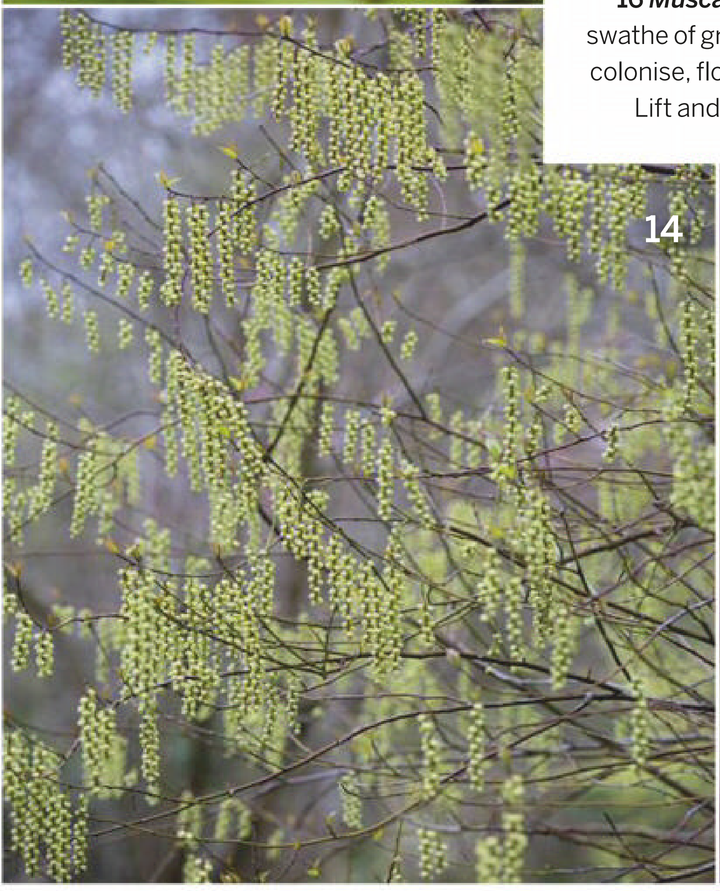
12 ***Viburnum*** **x** ***juddii*** Every garden should probably have at least one viburnum and this compact cultivar is delightful. In April, clusters of rose-pink buds appear at the tips of the bushy branches, opening into loose snowballs of whitish, highly scented flowers. The foliage emerges a crinkled, apple green, darkening with age. Unfussy about soil or aspect. 1.2m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

13 ***Amelanchier*** **x** ***lamarckii*** A tree that works hard all year offering starry white flowers in March with bronze early foliage, then dark berries in summer and a splendid autumn display. It works wonderfully as a multi-stemmed shrub, underplanted with white *Cyclamen coum* or *Crocus* 'Snow Bunting'. 10m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

14 ***Stachyurus praecox*** The beauty queen of all early flowering woody plants. Long racemes of palest yellow buds hang like strings of pearls from each arching leafless branch, whose bark is the richest chestnut. Buds open into bell-shaped flowers, forming a catkin of blossom around 10cm long: slender, dramatic and completely stunning. 3m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

15 ***Cercis siliquastrum*** **'Bodnant'** Intense purple flowers smother this Judas tree in late spring, followed by reddish-tinted, pendulous seedpods from July onwards. Emerging bronze, the heart-shaped leaves evolve into a deep green then fade to pale yellow. 8m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

16 ***Muscari armeniacum*** If you don't have acres for a bluebell wood, try planting a swathe of grape hyacinth, as violet-blue as a summer's sky. They will be just as eager to colonise, flooding any area with their strappy leaves and neat cones of tubular flowers. Lift and divide congested clumps regularly. 15cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.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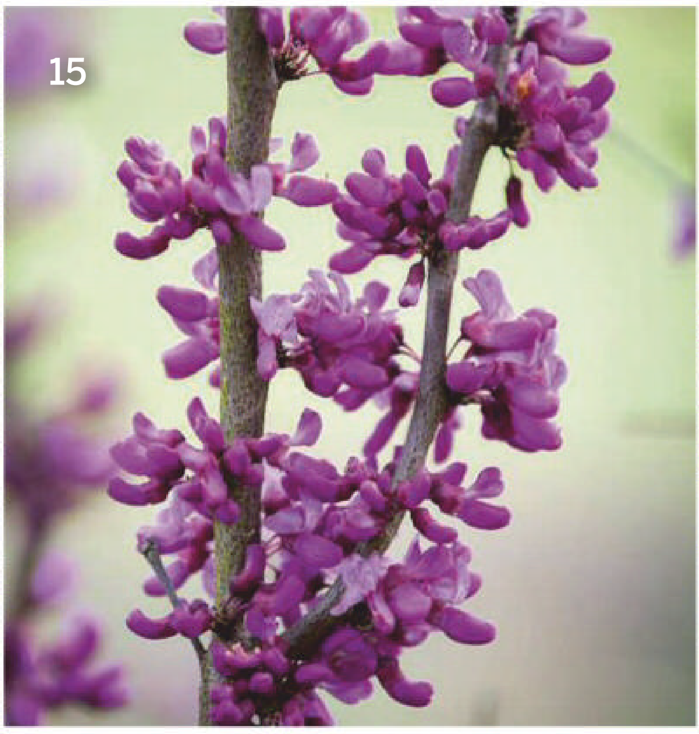
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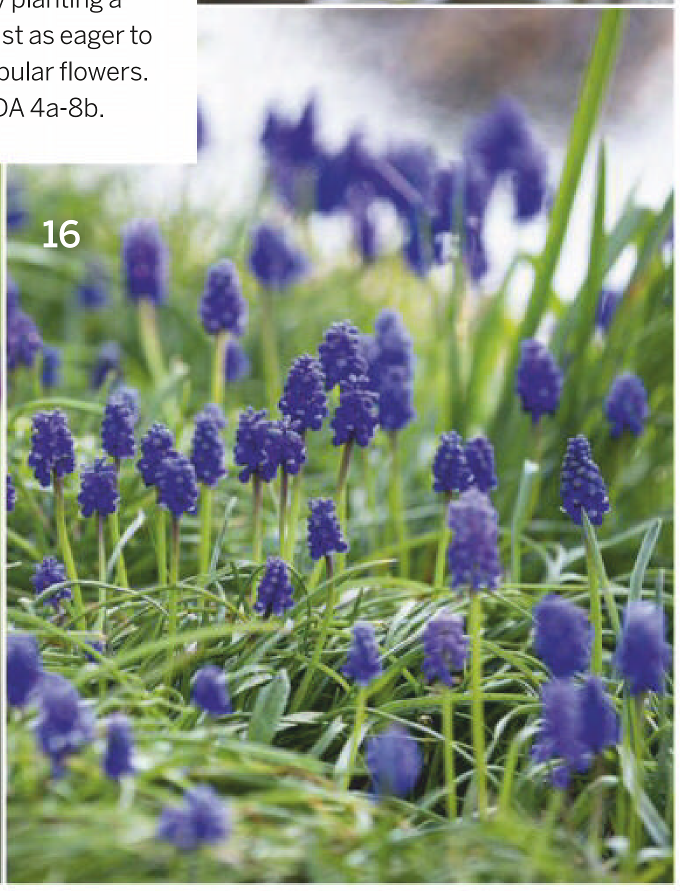
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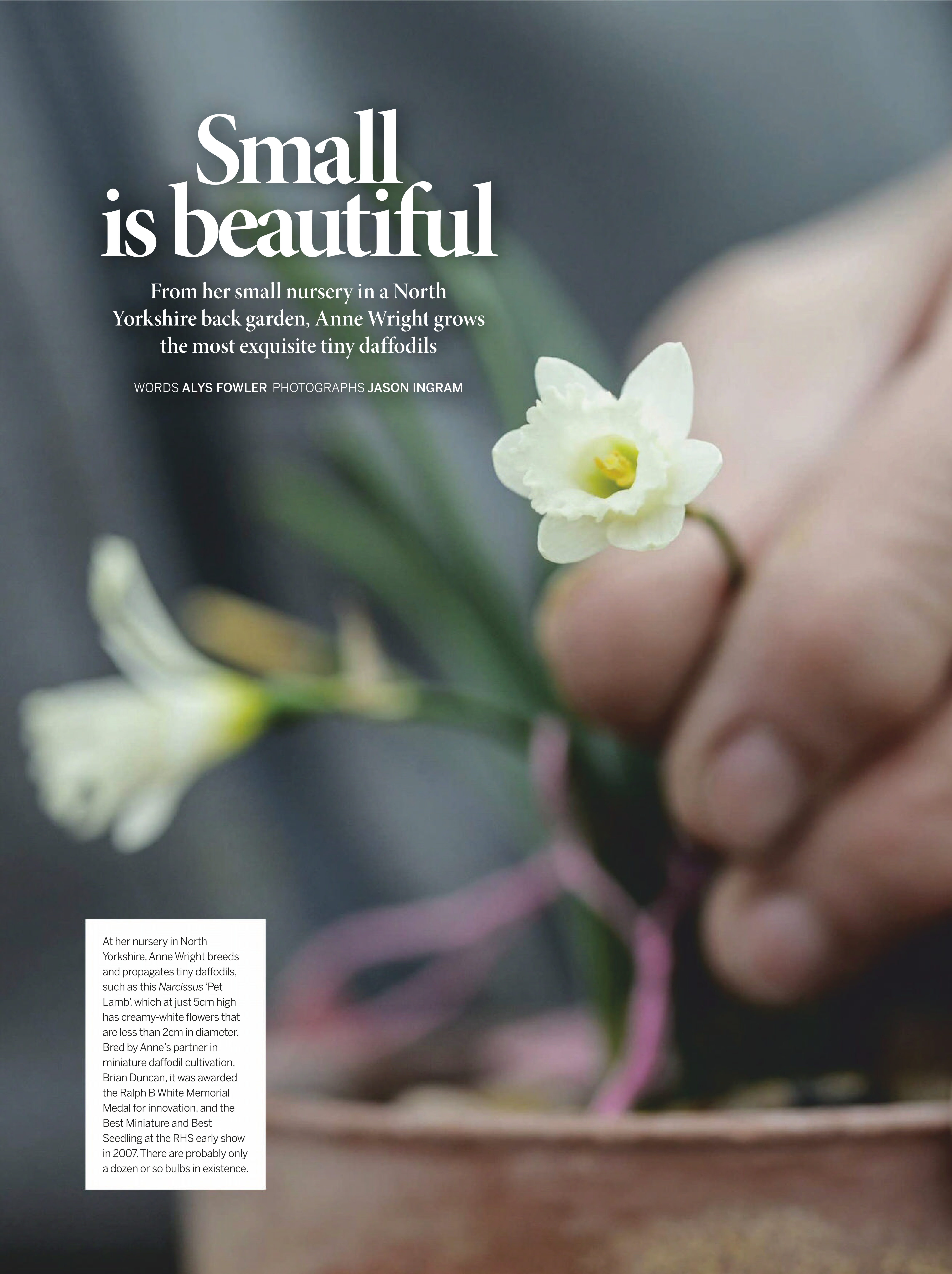


Small is beautiful

From her small nursery in a North Yorkshire back garden, Anne Wright grows the most exquisite tiny daffodils

WORDS **ALYS FOWLER** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

At her nursery in North Yorkshire, Anne Wright breeds and propagates tiny daffodils, such as this *Narcissus* 'Pet Lamb', which at just 5cm high has creamy-white flowers that are less than 2cm in diameter. Bred by Anne's partner in miniature daffodil cultivation, Brian Duncan, it was awarded the Ralph B White Memorial Medal for innovation, and the Best Miniature and Best Seedling at the RHS early show in 2007. There are probably only a dozen or so bulbs in existence.

If you want one of Anne's daffodils – and who wouldn't – then you'll have to be quick off the mark. Some cultivars can sell out within the first few hours

We planned to buy a cactus but we decided to stop first at an alpine nursery and that's where I bought my first *Narcissus rupicola*," says Anne Wright. "That was that." This sounds like an ordinary story about a passion for growing as many of a certain sort of plant as you can in a suburban back garden. But Anne, who owns Dryad Nursery in North Yorkshire, is more than a collector; for the past 36 years, she's been one of the UK's leading miniature daffodil breeders.

If you want one of her daffodils – and I can't imagine a soul in the world who wouldn't be smitten by their perfect proportion, innate grace and delicate appearance – then you're going to have to be quick off the mark, quite literally. First you'll have to join her list, which is essentially a worldwide fan club, then you'll get an email detailing the exact hour when the list is going to go live. "I can't let the list out while America is in bed," says Anne. "Everyone has to have a chance of getting the rare stuff."

Once the list is live, every ten minutes or so, Anne will update it. There may be a hundred items on the list, with perhaps just one or two bulbs of the rarer miniatures. Some cultivars can sell out within the first few hours. For the very rarest, then you have to head to eBay, where they go to auction. A single bulb can go for more than £400. Anne also has a mean side hustle in snowdrops, a single one of those can go for more than £1,000.

There is a growing craze for miniature bulbs, in part because you can collect a lot in a small space. A balcony garden can house an epic collection and they fuel the collector's mentality. "There are not many luxury products that you can buy at that price," says Anne. "Even though it sounds like a lot of money, it is affordable."

Anne doesn't work alone – she has a partner in one of Ireland's foremost show daffodil breeders, the octogenarian Brian Duncan, who also fell under the miniature spell and has produced around 850 daffodils to his name. Anne propagates his work at her nursery. "He often only has one or two bulbs of something," says Anne. The result is a firm friendship united by tiny things and a world-famous list.

When I ask Anne what has driven this passion of hers into a thriving business, there is a degree of pragmatism; a suburban back garden couldn't house a tree nursery. "I wanted something that is high value that didn't take up too much space," she admits. But it was also partly borne out of the frustrations of a collector. "When I first started collecting I found a US publication about growing older miniature daffs and tried to get hold of them, but to no avail, so I decided to grow my own. I found out what the parents were. My first cross was a success."

What makes the perfect miniature? "My ideal is a 10cm-tall, upright stem, with a flower that is in perfect proportion, so that it resembles a larger daffodil, just smaller. When a seedling flowers, that is what I look for first. Then a good clear colour, delicate and graceful appearance, long-lasting flowers, and hopefully a good scent. I especially like the flowers that have a sparkling crystalline texture – known as 'diamond dust'."

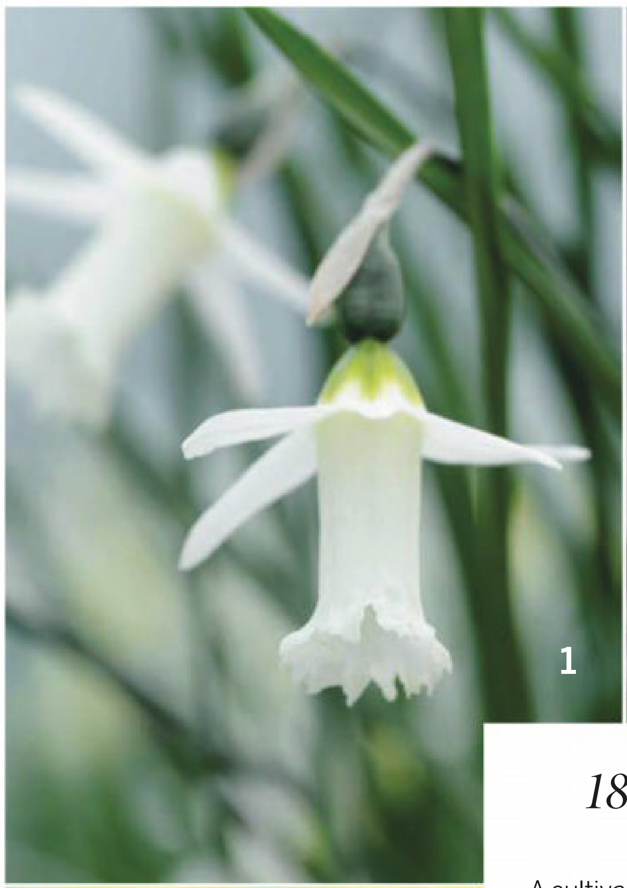
An official miniature, such as 'Snipe', has a flower that is less than 5cm across and a stem as long as you like, but Anne breeds true miniatures that have tiny flowers, less than 3cm across. "If the flower has a formal appearance with overlapping perianth segments, I will note that that one will be good for daffodil exhibitors. A more 'wild-looking' flower with a more delicate appearance will be more suitable for alpine growers," she explains. "Some seedlings may start off upright, but the stems will bend over and that's not ideal as a pot plant, I want something that will look as nice as possible and stay in flower for four to five weeks without lying on their sides."

It takes three to four years for a seedling to flower, then Anne will chip the successful ones and wait another two to three years for those to flower. It is, as Anne admits, very hard work. "I do seven days a week, often ten hours a day," she says, but miniature daffodils have her heart and her work is testament to that. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Dryad is a mail-order nursery only and doesn't open to the public. Anne's bulb list usually comes out in June, and you can add your name to her email list via her website: **dryad-home.co.uk**

Turn the page for more miniature daffodils ▷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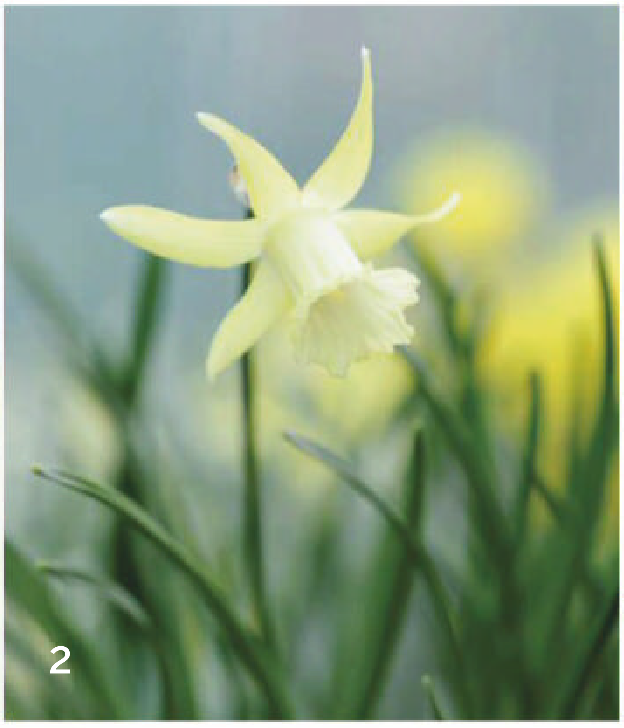
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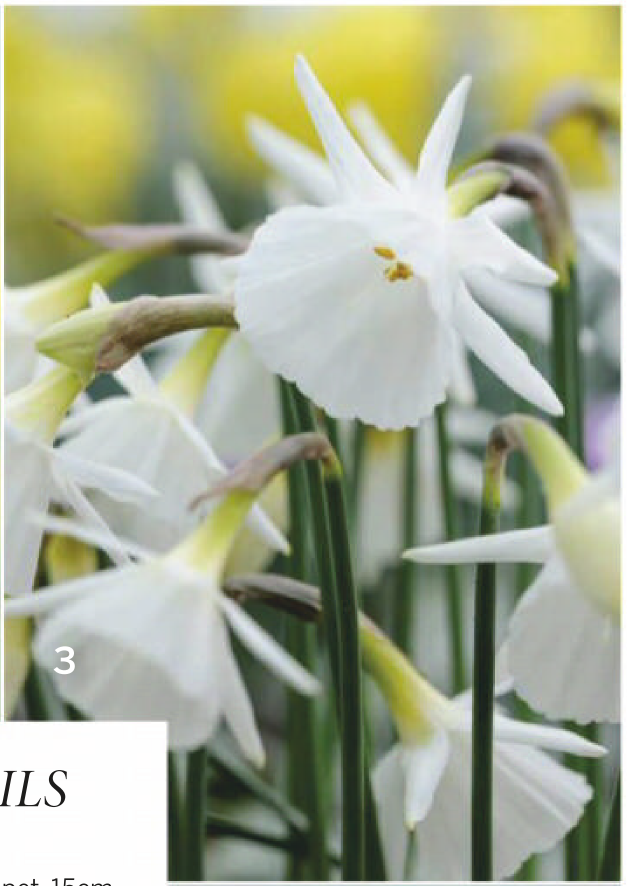
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18 KEY MINIATURE DAFFODILS

1 *Narcissus* 'Starlit'
A cultivar bred by Brain Duncan with a flanged, pure-white trumpet. 15cm.

2 *N.* 'Biondina'
Small, ivory-white flowers that have a slightly swept-back perianth and expanded corona. Bred by Anne. 15cm.

3 *N.* x *litigiosus* 'Giselle'
A much-coveted, self-sown hybrid that was found by Anne. It has an all-white corona and perianth, and is said to be easier to grow than other *N.* x *litigiosus* hybrids. 10cm.

4 *N.* 'Little Dryad'
Named for Anne's nursery, it has a cool, ivory-white flower with swept-back perianth, straight corona and flared mouth. 12cm.

5 *N.* 'Cheeky Chappie'
A show winner with lemon-yellow corona and short, reflexed, white perianth. Bred by Brian Duncan. 10cm.

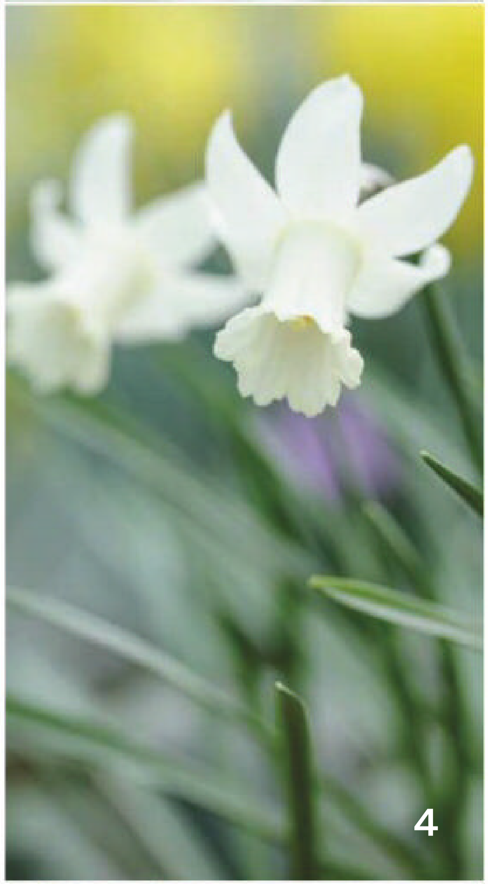
6 *N.* 'Snipe'
A readily available, old cultivar with delicate, pale-yellow and white flowers with a straight corona and perianth that doesn't fully reflex. 20cm.

7 *N.* 'Peach Twist'
A new introduction from Anne, the creamy perianth is twisted like a pinwheel, and the frilled corona is a delicate shade of peach. 12cm.

8 *N.* 'Wee Dote'
A Brian Duncan cultivar that opens bicoloured with a yellow corona and matures to pure white. It is a consistent show winner. 20cm.

9 *N.* 'Sleek'
A striking daffodil with an upright habit, a pure-white perianth and lemon-coloured, flanged trumpet. Anne says its makes a superb pot plant. 15cm.

Continues over the next three pages ▷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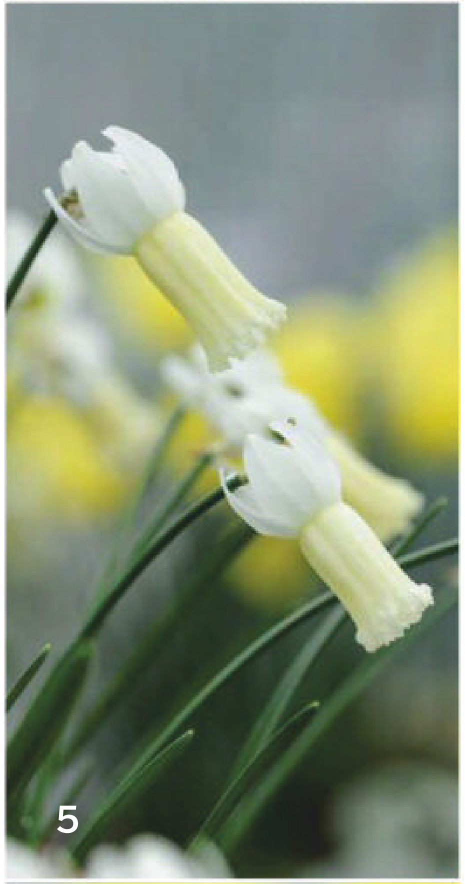
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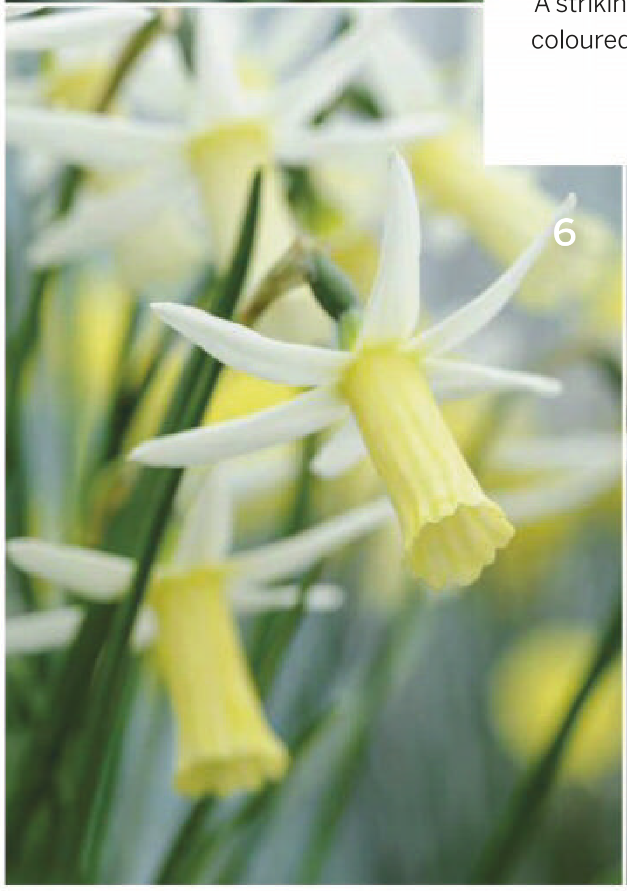
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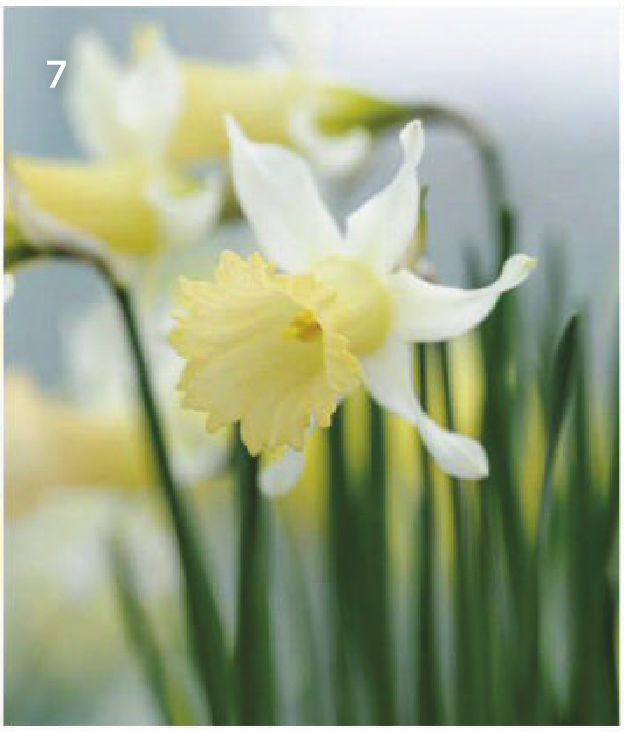
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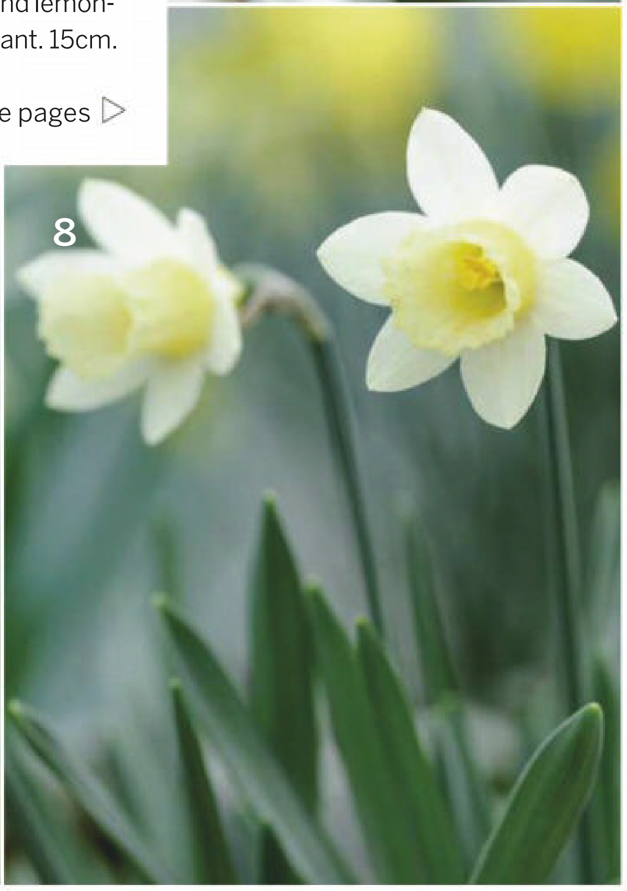
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HOW TO GROW MINIATURE DAFFODILS

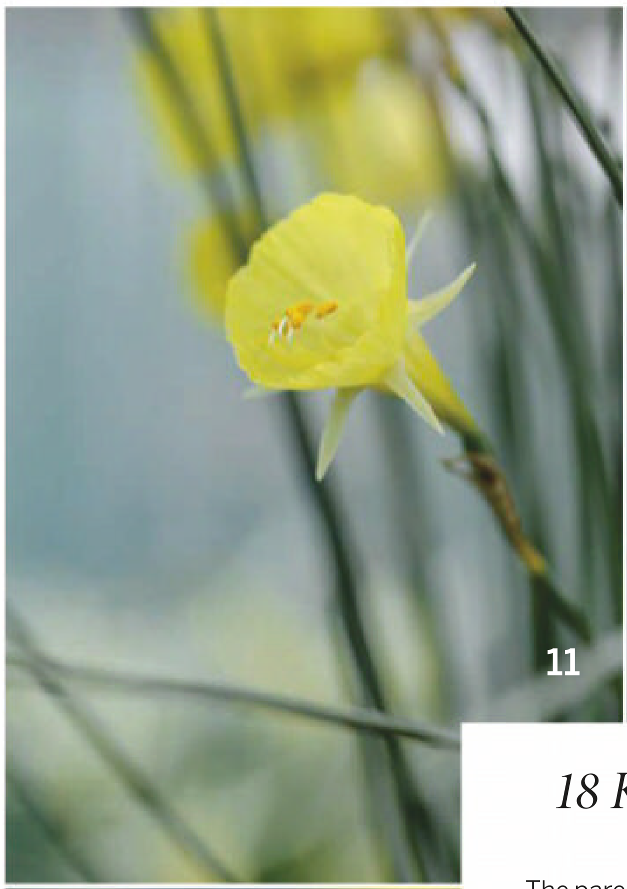
The miniature daffodil season starts in October and lasts through to April. Most miniature daffodils have a hardiness rating of RHS H4 to RHS H5, and are hardy outside in the UK if planted in the ground. However, if growing in pots, be careful not to allow the roots to freeze badly.

Anne grows her daffodils in both pots and raised beds. "If you want to plant in the garden, containers and raised beds are best, as slugs and miniatures don't mix," she says. The pots she uses are clay, plunged in damp sand in well-ventilated glasshouse, and allowed to become completely dry from May to September when she repots.

For pots Anne uses a 50:50 mix of perlite and potting compost, such as John Innes No.2 or No.3. She half fills the pots with the compost mix then adds a thin layer of coarse sand on to which she places the bulb, before covering it with more sand and then filling the pot with compost. There's no extra fertiliser in the mix. She uses a half-strength tomato feed after flowering to build up the bulbs – but doesn't deadhead, as she collects the seeds. Seedlings are repotted after two years, but all the rest of her bulbs are repotted every year.

For her raised beds Anne uses spent bulb compost, topped with a 20cm-layer of pure sand, top dressed with railway ballast.

She also creates mixed planters in large containers that she fills with spring flowers and bedding plants and then sinks a 9cm pot of miniature daffodils into the middle, so she can change cultivars throughout the season, dropping in a new one as the old one goes over. "This way I can have non-stop flowering from early January to the last week of April."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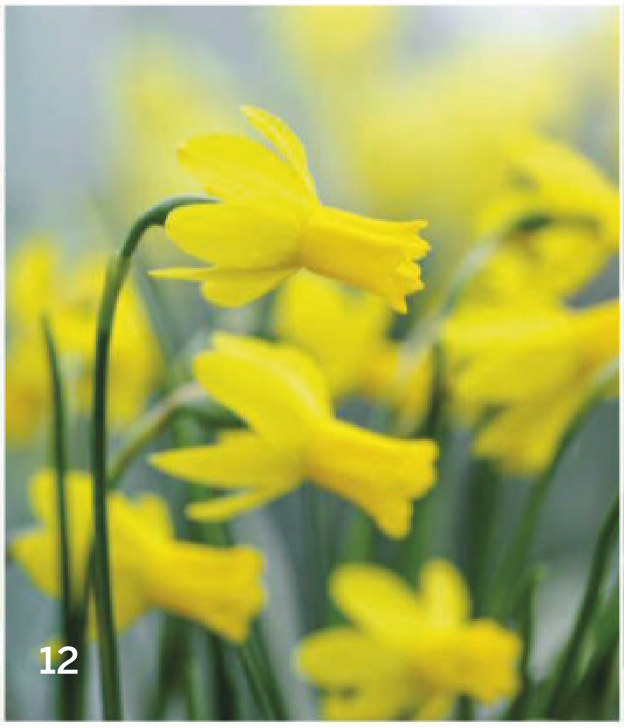
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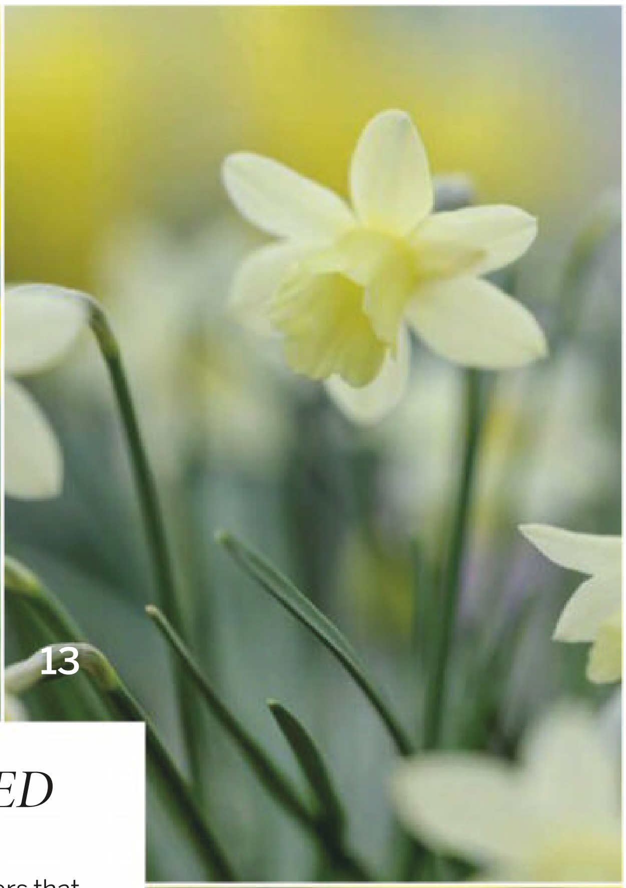
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18 KEY DAFFODILS CONTINUED

10 *N.* 'Gipsy Queen'
The parent of many miniature daffodils with small trumpet flowers that open pale yellow and mature to a white and yellow bicolour. Easy to obtain from specialist bulb sellers, it is a perfect size for containers. 9cm.

11 *N.* 'Mitimoto'
A bicoloured, hoop-petticoat daffodil with a golden corona and white perianth. It loves a dry summer and will increase happily on its own if the conditions are right. 15cm.

12 *N.* 'Gale Force'
One of Anne's favourites with deep-gold flowers and swept-back perianth, which makes it look as though it's facing a gale. 10-12cm.

13 *N.* 'Dormouse'
One of the tiniest daffodils, bred by Anne, with pale, greenish ivory flowers and a violet-like scent. The flowers are just 26mm wide. 8cm.

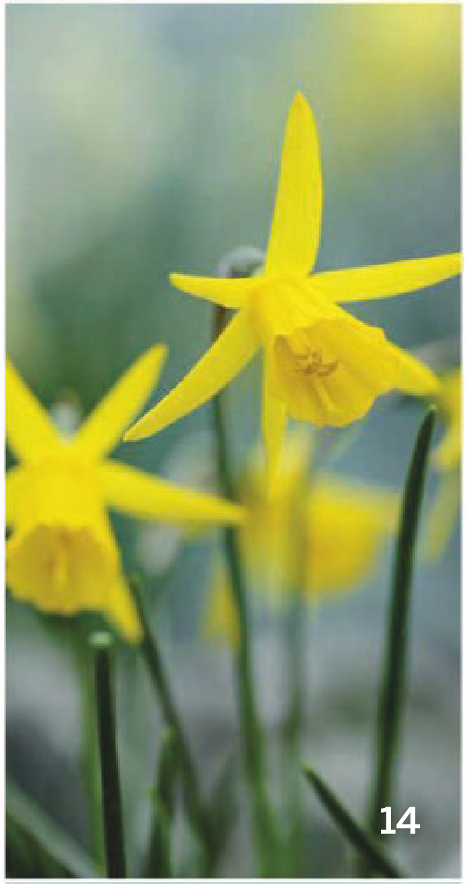
14 *N.* 'Coo'
A tiny daffodil bred in Tasmania, with a golden-yellow corona and perianth. Can be tricky to grow and is not one for beginners. 8cm.

15 *N.* 'Minionette'
Has chubby, yellow flowers with short corona and well-reflexed perianth. Anne named it after the character in *Despicable Me*. 12cm.

16 *N.* 'Fling'
Bred by Brian Duncan, the flowers are of excellent form, with a reflexed white perianth and lemon-yellow corona. 10cm.

17 *N. bulbocodium* var. *nivalis*
In some flowers of this hoop-petticoat species, only the style is exserted while in others, both style and stamen are exserted. 5-20cm.

18 *N.* 'Jim Lad'
One of Anne's first hybrids with 2cm-wide golden-yellow flowers. Incredibly hardy, it has survived in a trough on Anne's nursery down to -17°C. 12cm.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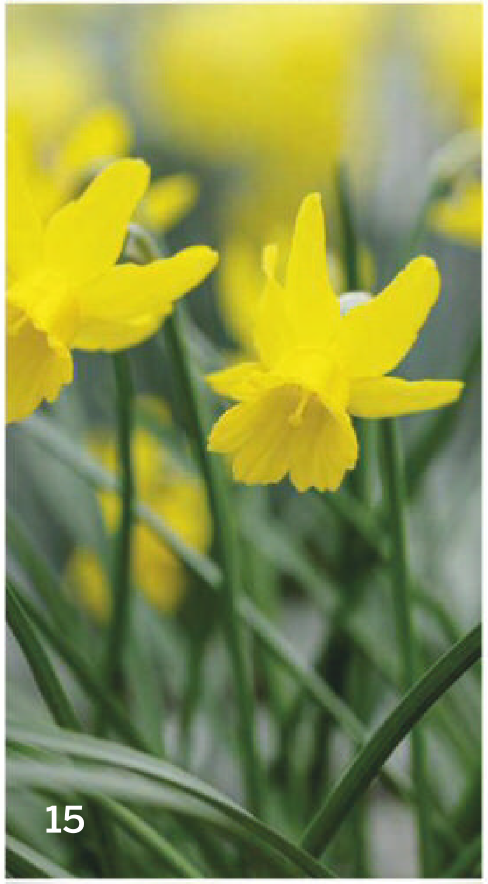
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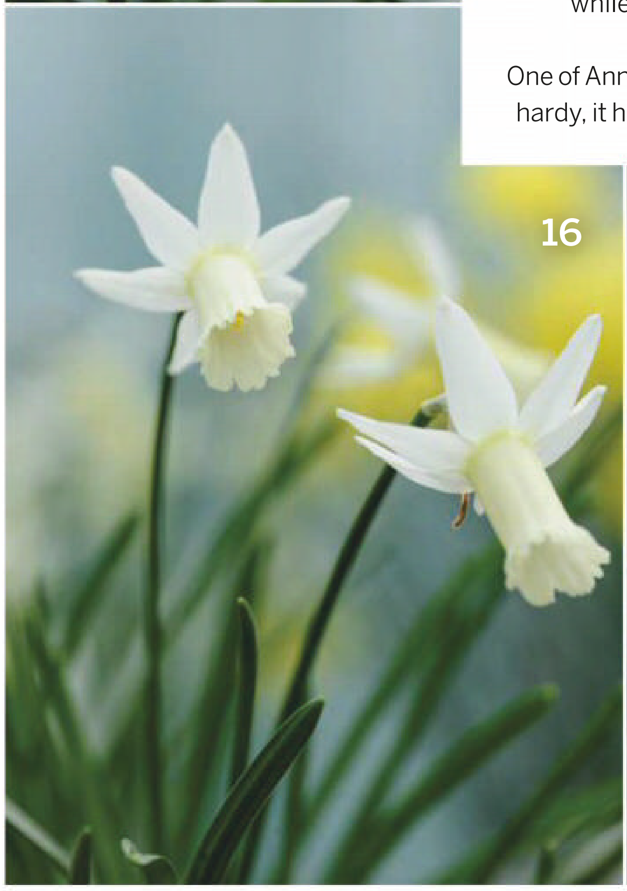
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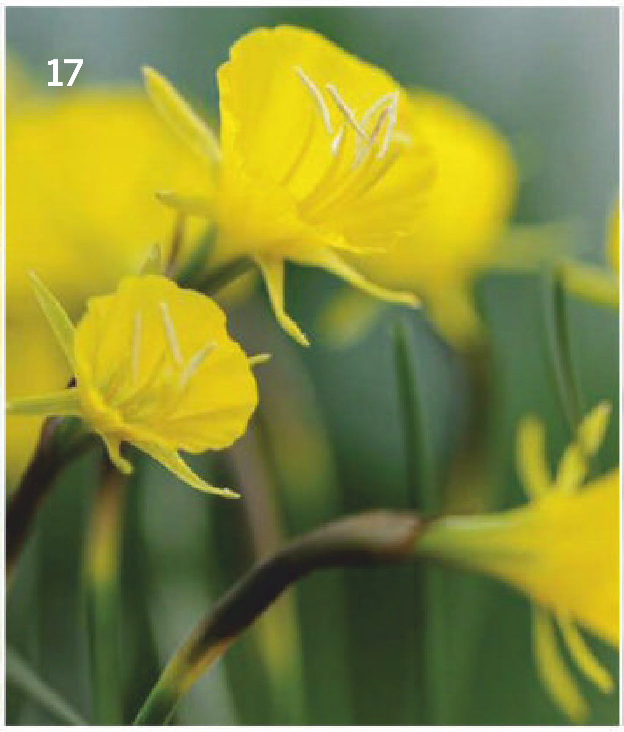
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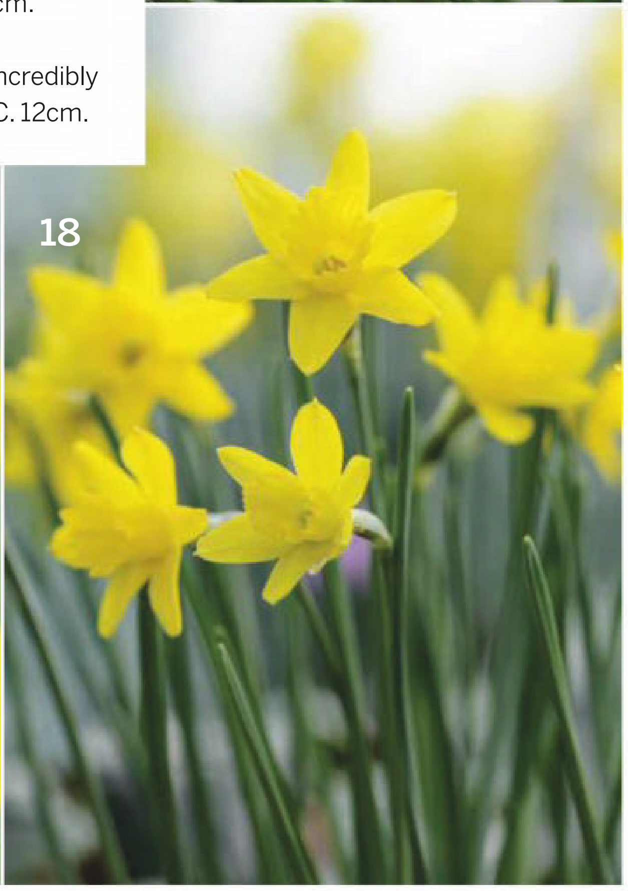
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HORTICULTURAL WHO’S WHO

GEORGE PLUMPTRE

The almost accidental chief executive of the National Garden Scheme on stumbling into horticulture and the benefits of having a varied career

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PORTRAIT **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

When George Plumptre was a boy his parents, Lord and Lady FitzWalter, decided to open their garden in support of the National Garden Scheme. Back then Goodnestone Park, their home in east Kent, was precisely the sort of aristocratic estate that featured in the famous Yellow Book of private gardens, welcoming paying visitors to raise money for charity. George could have had no idea that 50 years later he would be the chief executive of the NGS, responsible for the owners of some 3,700 gardens ranging in size from courtyards to country acres, and dispersing the millions of pounds generated every year from ticket sales and teas.

Back then he preferred cricket to gardening. With two older and two younger brothers he had plenty of opportunity to practice. “I remember appreciating the garden as a child, but mainly as a place to rampage around. My parents only inherited Goodnestone a couple of years before I was born and the garden was terribly overgrown in parts, which made an exciting jungle for us boys to explore.”

THE GARDENERS I MET ALONG THE WAY KNEW THAT I KNEW NOTHING, BUT THEY WERE GENEROUS IN EDUCATING ME

In the 1960s, his mother began reading gardening books and engaged John Wellard, a local lad, to help her tame the jungle and nurture what is now an internationally renowned garden and source of constant inspiration for George. “Although they were both novices, my mother and John rapidly became extremely skilful gardeners. By that stage I was away from home a lot, first at boarding school and then at university in Cambridge, reading history, but I loved to come home and see what they had done.”

After graduating George looked around for employment. “I was tremendously fortunate that my uncle, Bill Deedes, edited *The Daily Telegraph*, and his cricket correspondent, the legendary EW Swanton, was just going on a tour of Australia and needed a dogsbody back in the office.” Emboldened by this first experience of publishing, he combined his love of history with a budding appreciation of horticulture and sent a couple of articles on spec to *The Field* magazine. “They were kind enough to print my attempts and then, in 1980, commissioned me to write about the Queen Mother for her 80th birthday. That gave me the idea to write a book about royal gardens, which I started the same year, when I was 24.

“The Queen Mother graciously gave me permission to go to all of her houses. Frankly, I was stumbling through the horticulture but it turned out quite well and the publisher, Collins, was pleased enough to commission me to write a guide to British gardens. That was my first proper introduction to the NGS. I needed to write about 200 gardens in total, with every county equally represented, so I turned for help to the NGS regional organisers.”

George set off in the autumn of 1981 on a road trip that lasted until spring 1983, visiting every garden on his list in two-week stints. The odyssey took him from the House of Tongue on the north coast of Scotland to Trengwainton, in the southerly tip of Cornwall. “The gardeners I met along the way knew that I knew nothing, but they were generous in educating me and it proved a most enriching experience.” He was welcomed by the cream of 20th-century horticulture. Rosemary Verey invited him to stay at Barnsley House, Lanning Roper discussed English country garden style and Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, renowned architect and landscape designer, became a particular hero.

“I was very lucky at that formative stage of my career, and was soon being commissioned to produce a book a year plus lots of freelance features, but I had a wife and three small children, so it was all a bit hand to mouth.” Consequently, when auction house Sotheby’s asked him to be its Kent representative, George jumped at the chance of a regular retainer.

He then embarked on a period of fascinatingly varied employment, including taking on the role of gardening correspondent at *The Times*. George spent two years working in South Africa for Sotheby’s and co-founded Greenfingers, the first dedicated gardening website. In 2003 he joined Bonhams auction house back in England. Three years later, the NGS invited him to become a trustee, and he was on hand when NGS chief executive Julia Grant announced her retirement in 2010. “I volunteered to fill in on an interim basis and quickly realised it was the job of a lifetime so I applied along with everyone else.”

George has relished the role for nine years and, at the age of 63, has the energy levels of a man in his forties. “I have had such a varied career that I still feel quite fresh about work, but the NGS really is now my life. In my time, we have developed closer partnerships with our charities, pioneered gardening and health research from The King’s Fund, and striven to get better acquainted with the generous owners of our open gardens. It was already the most incredible organisation. I hope I have helped power it into the 21st century.” □

USEFUL INFORMATION

The NGS *Garden Visitor’s Handbook 2020* (the Yellow Book) is available now from ngs.org.uk priced £13.99.

GARDEN OPEN
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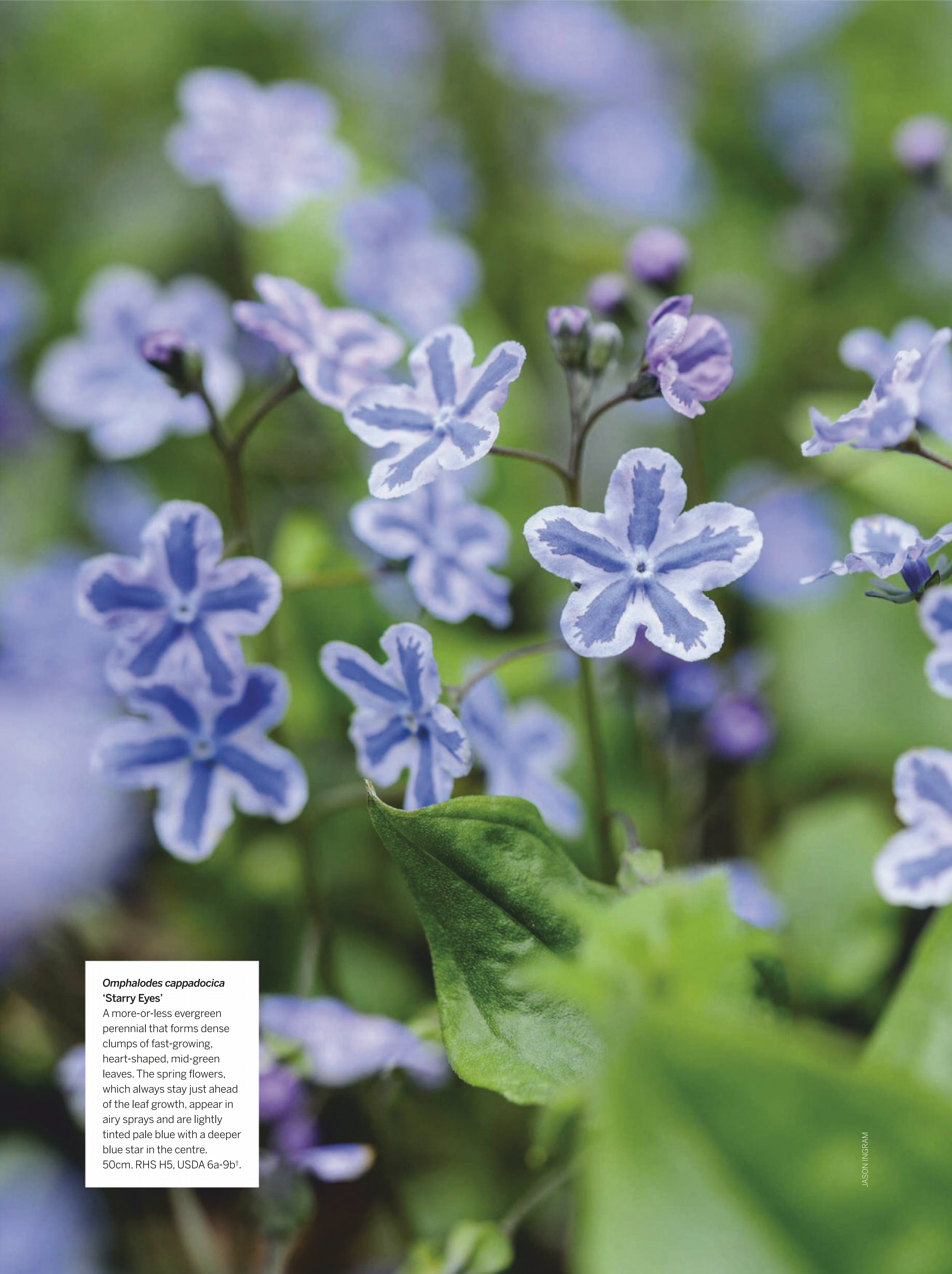


***Omphalodes cappadocica* 'Starry Eyes'**

A more-or-less evergreen perennial that forms dense clumps of fast-growing, heart-shaped, mid-green leaves. The spring flowers, which always stay just ahead of the leaf growth, appear in airy sprays and are lightly tinted pale blue with a deeper blue star in the centre. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b†.

JASON INGRAM

FORGET-ME-NOT FLOWERS

The vivid-blue, starry-eyed, forget-me-not flowers of many members of the Boraginaceae family makes them unforgettable and there are plenty of options for adding their appeal to your garden

WORDS **MATTHEW BIGGS**

Perhaps the most familiar members of the Boraginaceae family, are the blue borage (*Borago officinalis*) flowers sometimes found floating in a glass at a summer drinks party, but this plant family contributes so much more through the beauty of the plants it offers to the gardener. Boraginaceae is a huge plant family, divided into five subfamilies that are distinguished by their flower structure, including Boraginoideae, into which the starry, five-petalled flowers belong. Many, though not all, are known by the common name of forget-me-not, although they all have forget-me-not like flowers. *Myosotis,* which takes its name from the classical Greek word for mouse ear (after its leaf shape), is the genus we most closely associate with the name forget-me-not. *Myosotis scorpioides* thrives by water, while *M. sylvatica* adds billowing daintiness to the woodland and its cultivars to containers and spring planting schemes. Also part of the Boraginoideae clan are the *Brunnera*, *Lithodora*, *Omphalodes* and *Pulmonaria* species and cultivars, as well as *Cerinthe major* 'Purpurascens' with its nodding purple, honey-scented flowers and purple bracts, *Heliotropium arborescens* with its delicious cherry-pie fragrance and *Myosotidium hortensia*, the Chatham Island forget-me-not, with thick, glossy leaves and intense blue flowers. Alpine enthusiasts will be familiar with *Eritrichium nanum*, the fairy forget-me-not, a tiny plant, described by Reginald Farrer in his book *The English Rock Garden* as 'the Herald of Heaven, crowned King of the Alps'.

For these plants placing is everything. *Myosotis sylvatica* and its cultivars rapidly succumb to powdery mildew if heat and drought combine towards the end of spring but are not alone in disliking drought. *Omphalodes* prefer moist, humus-rich soil, in cool, dappled shade, and are ideal for planting under deciduous shrubs or naturalising in woodland, where they combine well with *Digitalis purpurea*, *D. purpurea* f. *albiflora*, ferns, such as *Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum* and *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau', and woodland grasses. They can take a while to settle and dislike being moved. In *Cottage Garden Flowers,* Margery Fish wrote that *Omphalodes cappadocica* 'makes a good clump of very elegant, smooth, pointed leaves, above which we have those dainty sprays of very blue flowers. Why is it, I wonder, that blue flowers give such a feeling of innocence and simplicity?'

Although *Brunnera* have made their name as groundcover, tolerant of dry shade, they perform best in moderately fertile, moist, humus-rich soil. 'Jack Frost' with its distinctive leaf markings has become justifiably famous (some argue it should be grown for its foliage alone) and 'Starry Eyes', found in 2005 as a chance seedling between 'Betty Bowring' and 'Henry's Eyes' in the collection of Belgian plant breeder Chris Ghyselen, is an attractive departure from the traditional blue. Both are perfect for edging paths, or in containers in courtyard gardens.

Symphytum 'Hidcote Pink', which is both practical and pretty, needs the space of the wild garden, where its tendency to wander can be controlled by adding the leaves to compost heaps or for making the liquid fertiliser comfrey tea. In the rock garden or on a hot sunny bank, *Lithodora diffusa*, comes to the fore. This native of western France, the Pyrenees and northwest Spain, is found on acidic soils, often in association with *Daboecia cantabrica*. Winter wet will kill the plant and it should be trimmed after flowering in mid spring and early summer, to keep it tidy. It's not fully hardy and in colder gardens should be grown in an alpine house.

Among all of these enticing choices, one of my favourites is *Anchusa azurea* 'Loddon Royalist' whose deep-blue flowers make it desirable for use in herbaceous borders and wildlife gardens. Plants are short lived and should be propagated every three years and dislike shade, waterlogging and root disturbance. Deadheading encourages a second flush of flowers and removing the flower stems after they have finished ensures all the energy goes into forming basal leaf rosettes.

When it comes to selecting plants for your garden, the forget-me-not in its many forms – and its associated starry-eyed friends – should not be forgotten. ❐

• Author Matthew Biggs is a garden writer and broadcaster. His recommendations for the best forget-me-not flowers can be found over the next five pages.

PLANT PROFILE

What The plant family Boraginaceae, comprises some 120 genera and 2,600 species, while the subfamily Boraginoideae is made up of 42 genera and more than 600 species. It includes annuals, biennials and perennials with a few climbers and large trees. Many, not just *Myosotis*, are commonly known as forget-me-nots, while others with forget-me-not flowers are known as navelworts, bugloss and borage.

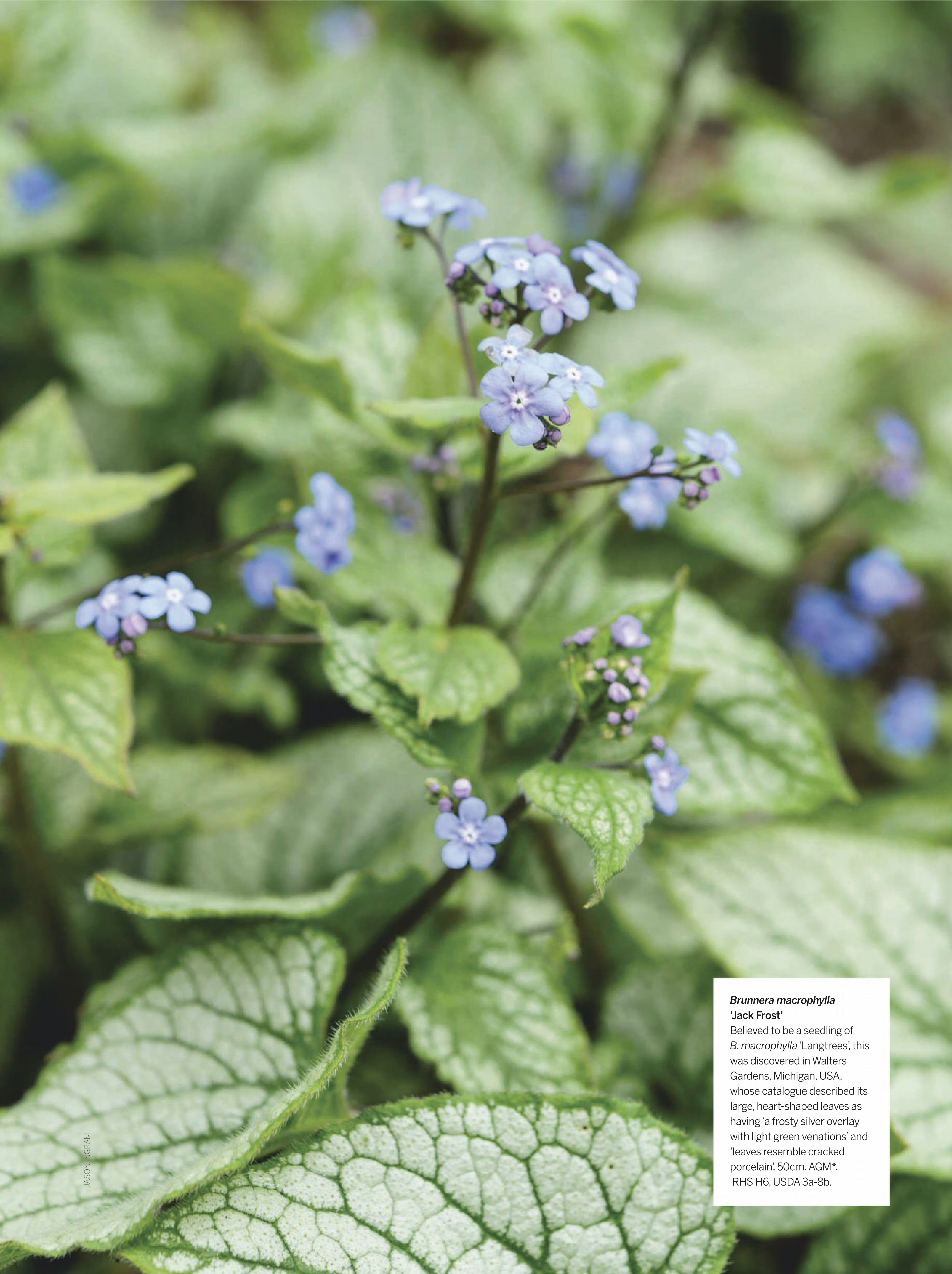
Origins Found mainly in the temperate northern hemisphere, particularly in the Mediterranean, as well as in Australasia, South America and South Africa; some genera are almost exclusively located in the tropics.

Season Flowering early spring to late summer.

Conditions They occur in a wide range of habitats from sea level to 4,000m from high-altitude alpine screes to lowland tropics. Most of those considered garden worthy are from cool temperate woodland, mainly from deciduous woods but occasionally evergreen forests of spruce, pine or fir. Many found at high altitude grow in rock crevices and are snow covered in winter.

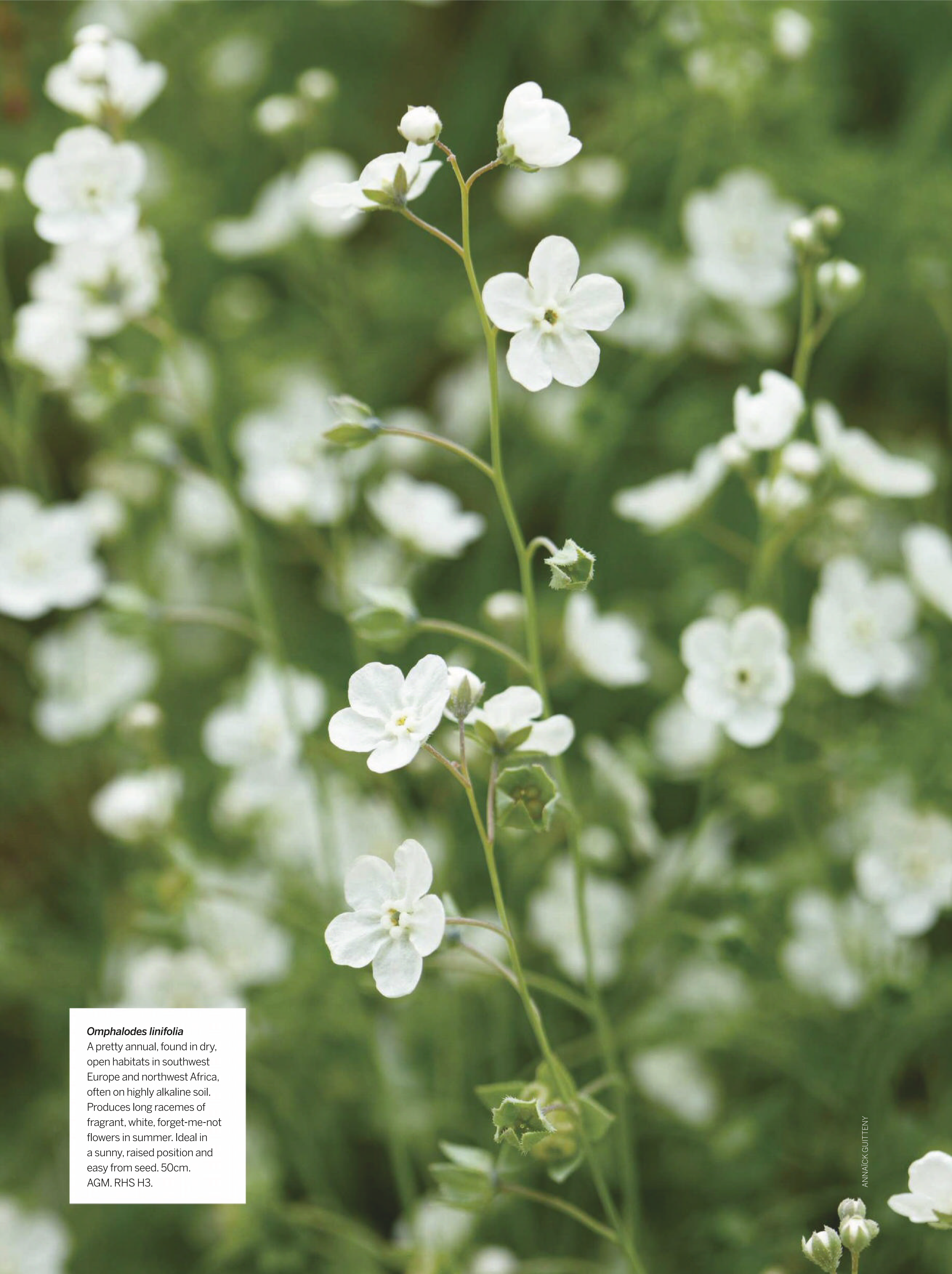
Hardiness Variable.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.



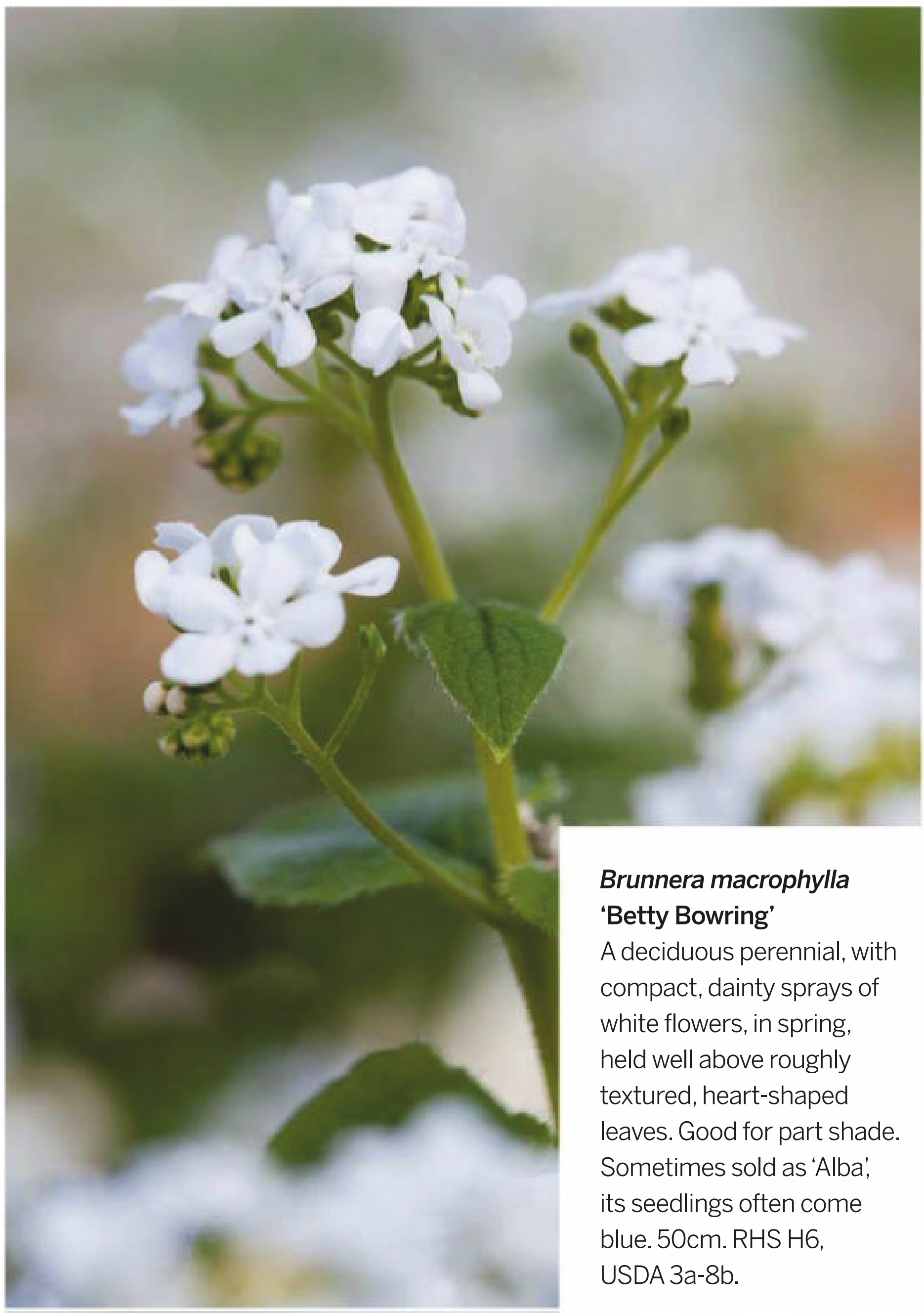
JASON INGRAM

***Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost'**
Believed to be a seedling of *B. macrophylla* 'Langtrees', this was discovered in Walters Gardens, Michigan, USA, whose catalogue described its large, heart-shaped leaves as having 'a frosty silver overlay with light green venations' and 'leaves resemble cracked porcelain'. 50cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

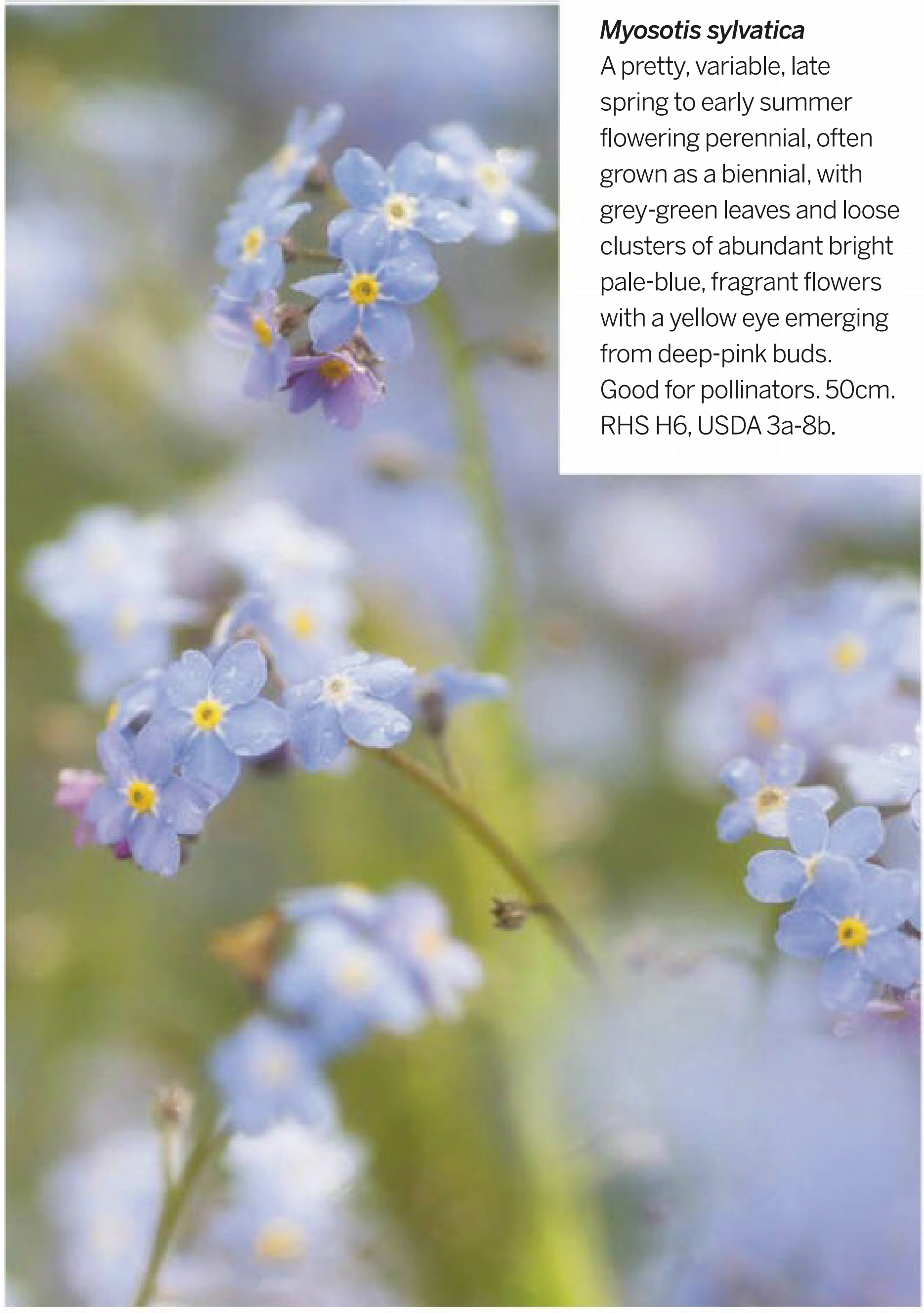


Omphalodes linifolia
A pretty annual, found in dry, open habitats in southwest Europe and northwest Africa, often on highly alkaline soil. Produces long racemes of fragrant, white, forget-me-not flowers in summer. Ideal in a sunny, raised position and easy from seed. 50cm. AGM. RHS H3.

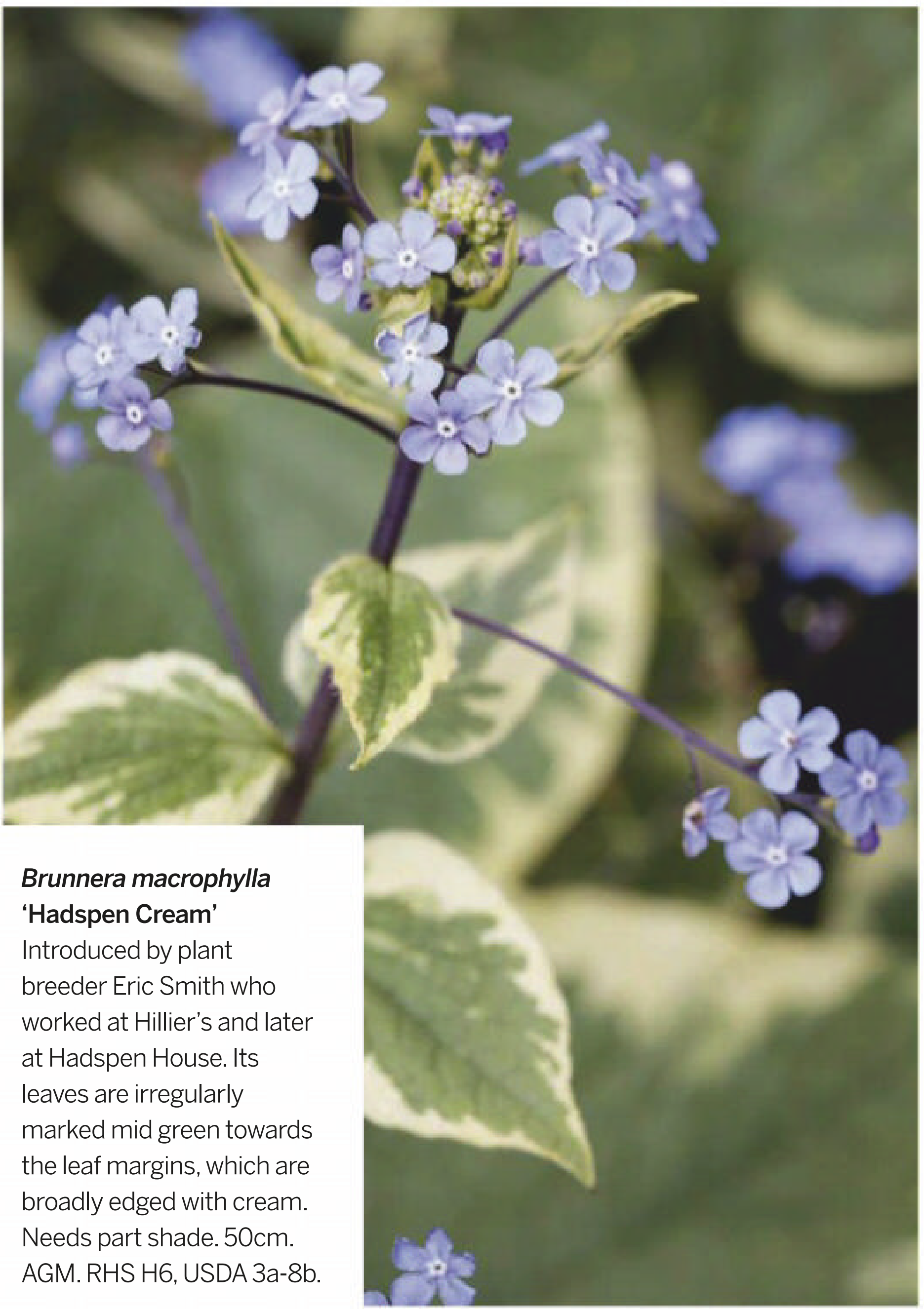
ANNAÏCK GUITTENY



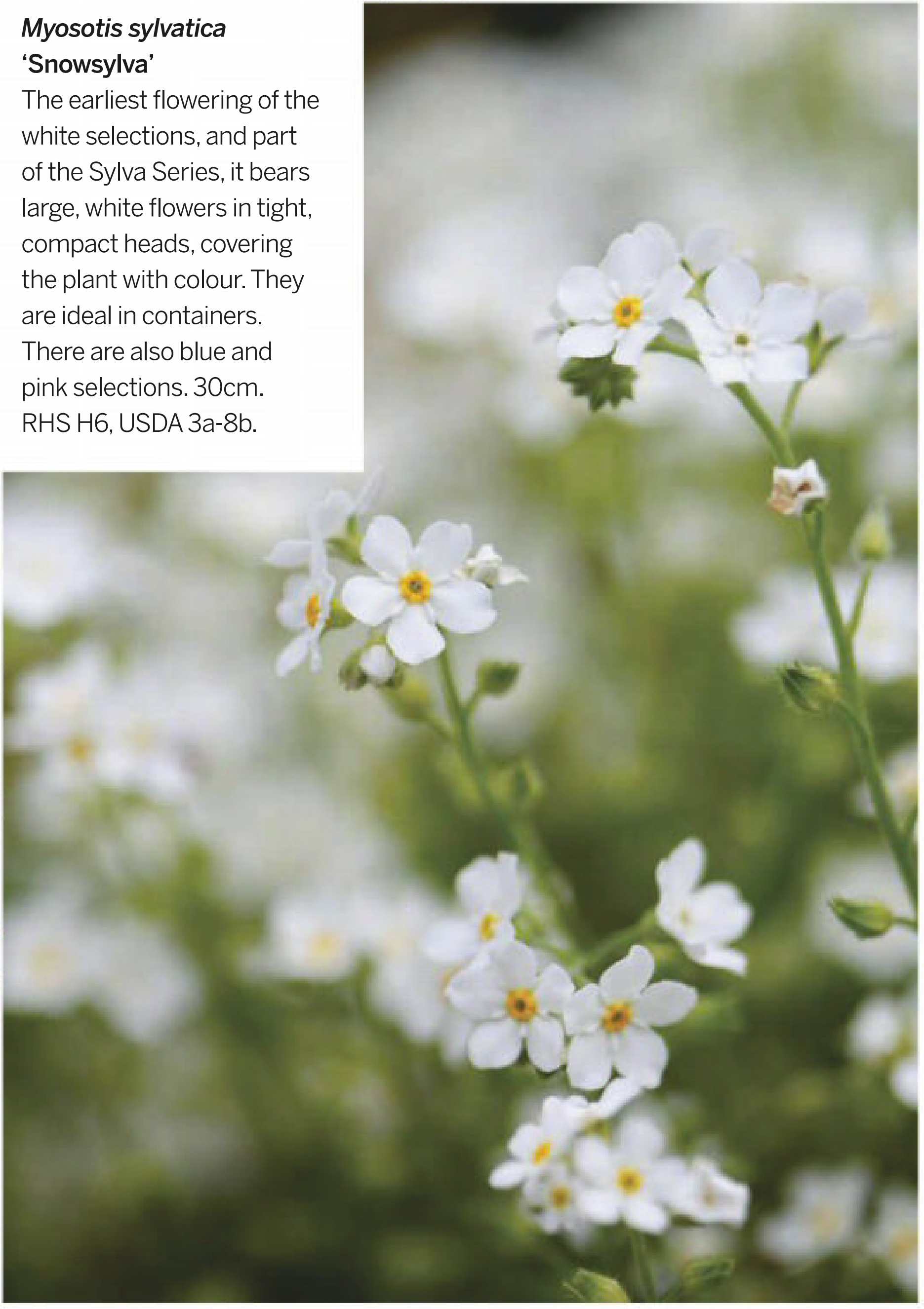
***Brunnera macrophylla* 'Betty Bowring'**
A deciduous perennial, with compact, dainty sprays of white flowers, in spring, held well above roughly textured, heart-shaped leaves. Good for part shade. Sometimes sold as 'Alba', its seedlings often come blue. 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.



Myosotis sylvatica
A pretty, variable, late spring to early summer flowering perennial, often grown as a biennial, with grey-green leaves and loose clusters of abundant bright pale-blue, fragrant flowers with a yellow eye emerging from deep-pink buds. Good for pollinators. 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

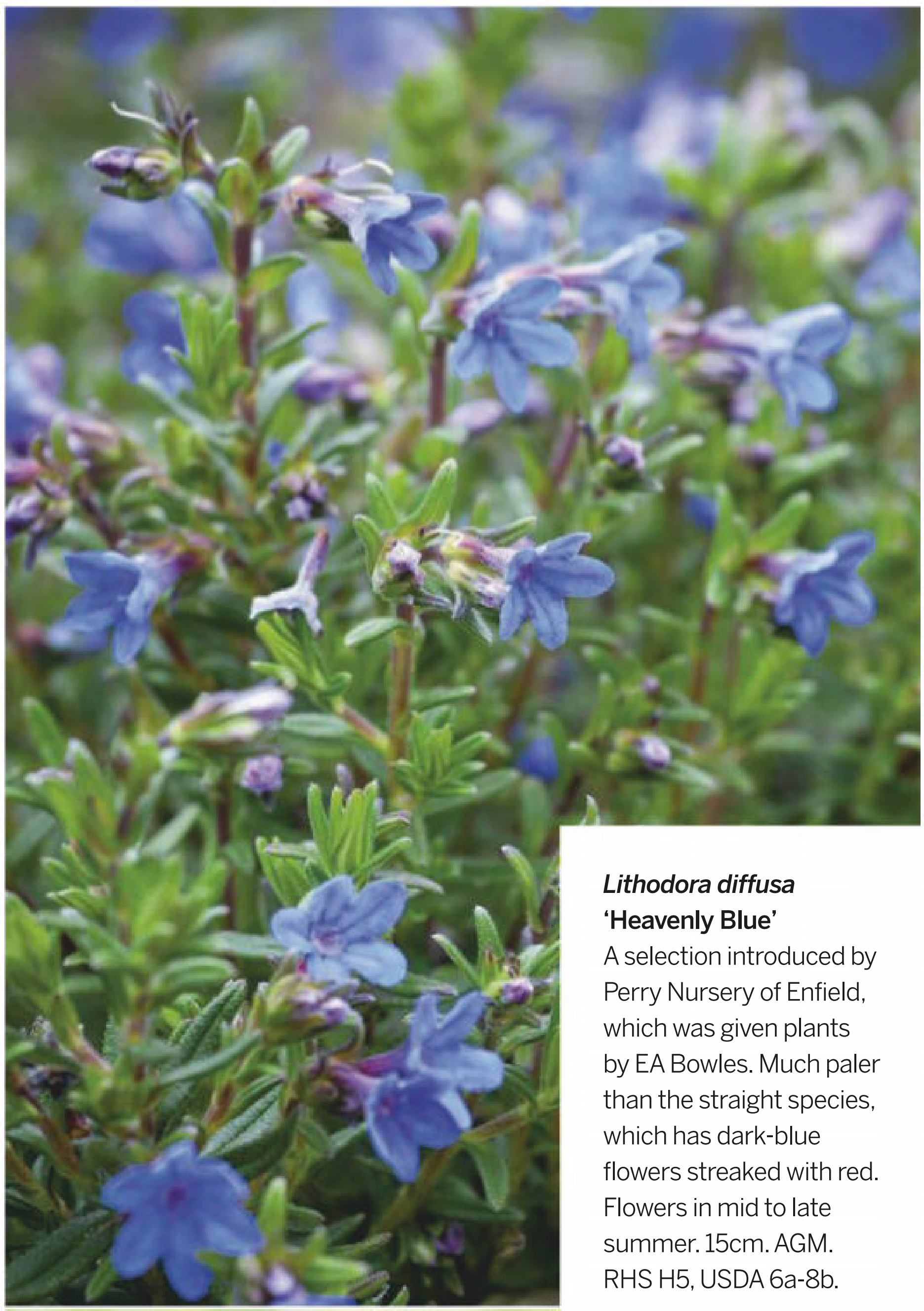


***Brunnera macrophylla* 'Hadspen Cream'**
Introduced by plant breeder Eric Smith who worked at Hillier's and later at Hadspen House. Its leaves are irregularly marked mid green towards the leaf margins, which are broadly edged with cream. Needs part shade. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

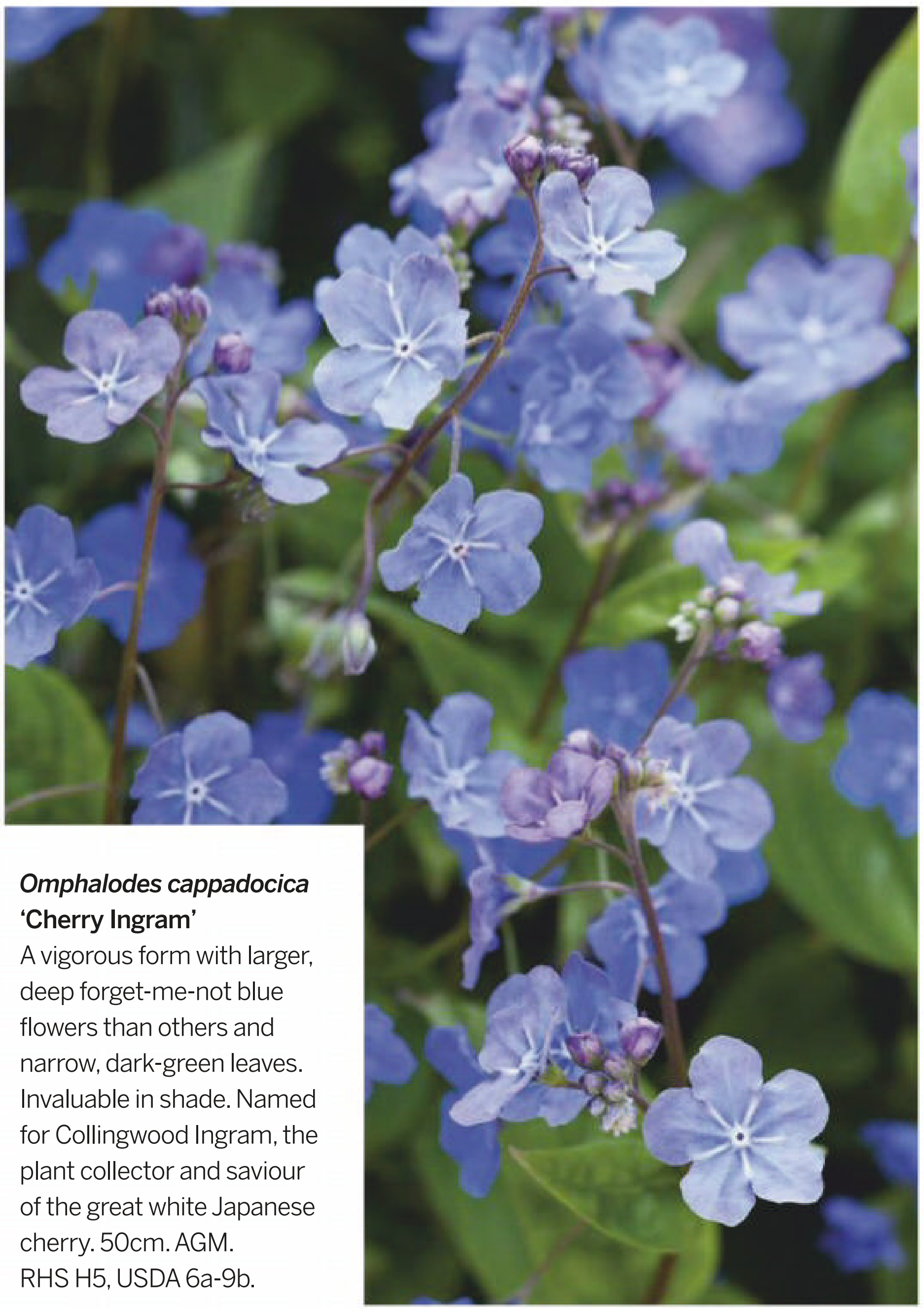


***Myosotis sylvatica* 'Snowsylva'**
The earliest flowering of the white selections, and part of the Sylva Series, it bears large, white flowers in tight, compact heads, covering the plant with colour. They are ideal in containers. There are also blue and pink selections. 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

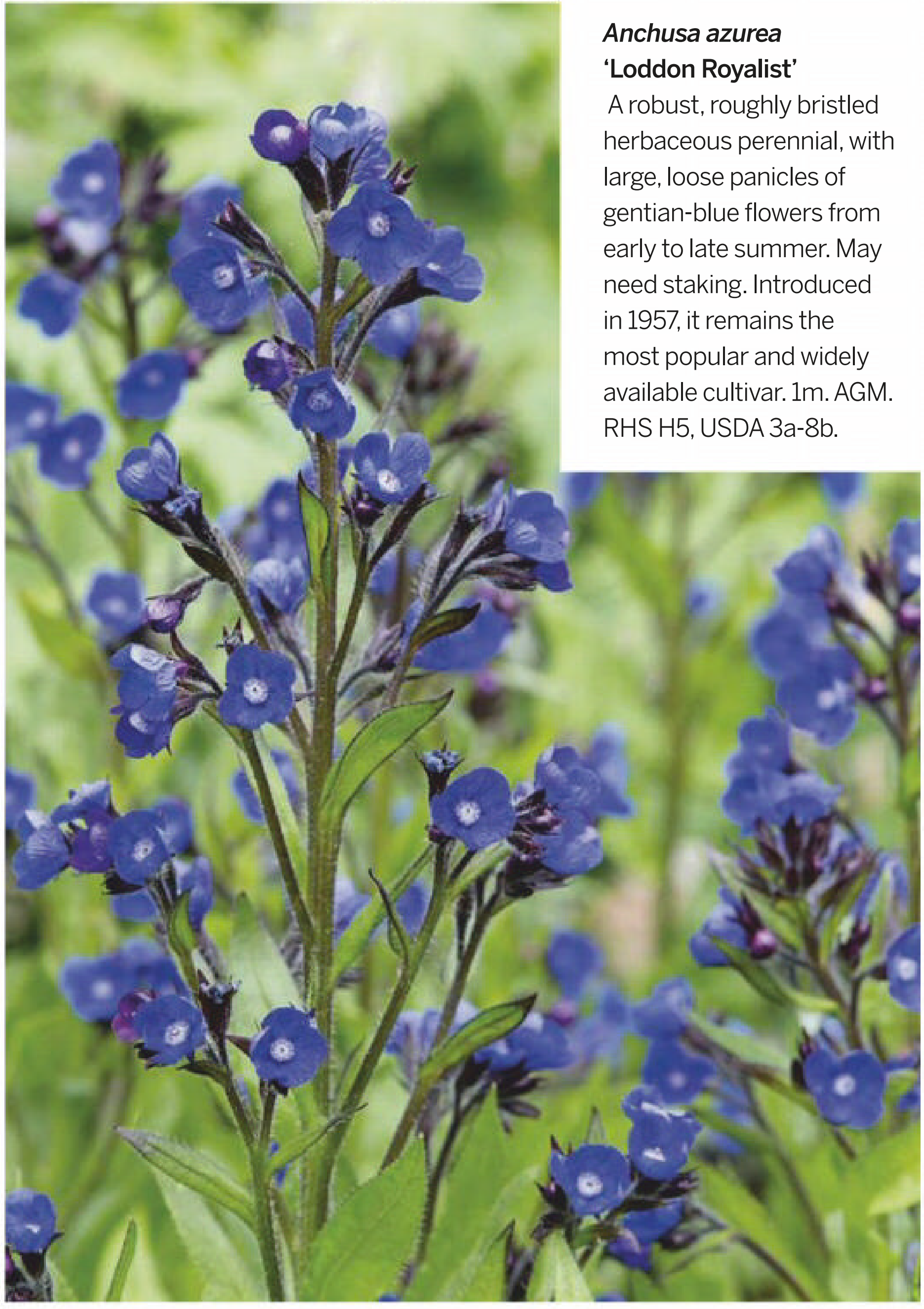
RACHEL WARNE; MARK BOLTON / GAP PHOTOS; ANNAICK GUITTENY; MATT GIBSON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



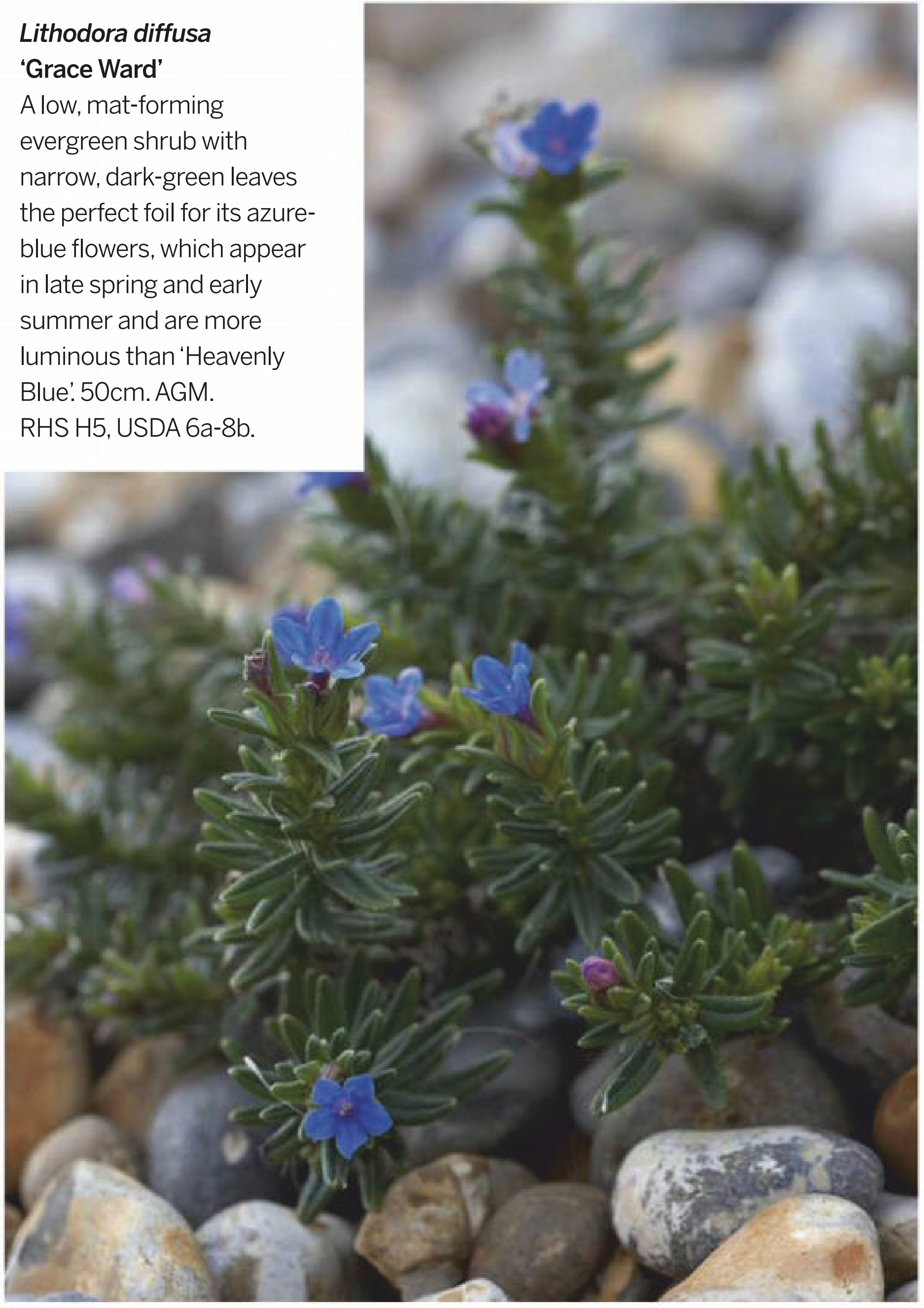
Lithodora diffusa **'Heavenly Blue'**
A selection introduced by Perry Nursery of Enfield, which was given plants by EA Bowles. Much paler than the straight species, which has dark-blue flowers streaked with red. Flowers in mid to late summer. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.



Omphalodes cappadocica **'Cherry Ingram'**
A vigorous form with larger, deep forget-me-not blue flowers than others and narrow, dark-green leaves. Invaluable in shade. Named for Collingwood Ingram, the plant collector and saviour of the great white Japanese cherry. 50cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



Anchusa azurea **'Loddon Royalist'**
A robust, roughly bristled herbaceous perennial, with large, loose panicles of gentian-blue flowers from early to late summer. May need staking. Introduced in 1957, it remains the most popular and widely available cultivar. 1m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.



Lithodora diffusa **'Grace Ward'**
A low, mat-forming evergreen shrub with narrow, dark-green leaves the perfect foil for its azure-blue flowers, which appear in late spring and early summer and are more luminous than 'Heavenly Blue'. 50cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

JONATHAN BUCKLEY X2, MATT ANKER, TIM GAINEY / ALL GAP PHOTOS

Myosotidium hortensia
Known as the Chatham Island, or sometimes giant, forget-me-not, it is now endangered in its native habitat on the New Zealand islands. However, its striking, ridged, thick glossy leaves and clusters of lavender-blue flowers mark it as a choice garden plant. 60cm. RHS H4.

***Myosotis sylvatica* 'Rosylva'**
Billowing mounds of rose-coloured blooms, held on stiff, wiry stems, almost obscure the fresh-green leaves. Like other members of the Sylva Series, it self-seeds freely and is beneficial for pollinators. 30cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

MARIANNE MAJERUS GARDEN IMAGES; NOVA PHOTO GRAPHIK / GAP PHOTOS

Where to plant

Success with most of these plants relies on planting in the right location, so understanding their native habitats ensures you put the 'right plant in the right place'. Most *Myosotis* cultivars are derived from *M. scorpioides* (the water or marsh forget-me-not) and *M. sylvatica* (the wood or garden forget-me-not). *M. scorpioides*, from central and northern Europe, Asia and North Africa, is found in damp ditches, or shallow watercourses, in sun or light shade, making it ideal for bog gardens or pond margins. *M. sylvatica* is found in damp woodland and mountain grassland to 2,000m, and needs well-drained soil and dappled shade.

Anchusa grows throughout Central Asia and the Mediterranean, on hillsides, in poor, well-drained soil and full sun. *Omphalodes cappadocica* from Turkey and the Caucasus prefers moist, humus-rich soil, in cool, dappled shade, while *Brunnera* comes from the mountain forests of the Caucasus, where air is cool and moist and the soil rich, so place accordingly.

Propagation

Surface sow *Myosotis* species and cultivars in mid to late spring, on to moist, well-drained, peat-free seed compost and then either put the tray in a dark place or cover it lightly with compost. Darkness is required for germination, which takes from less than a week to a month at 20°C. Once seedlings are large enough to handle, prick them out, then transplant to their final position at 25cm apart. Seeds can also be sown directly where they're to flower once the danger of frost has passed. Rake the ground into a fine tilth, then sow in straight drills, so it is easier to identify and remove weed seedlings. The straight lines disappear as the plants grow. Forget-me-nots self-seed prolifically and can rapidly become a nuisance, so cut back after flowering.

Myosotidium hortensia needs gritty, moist, free-draining soil in a sheltered frost-free position. It prefers mild climates and, in colder climates, to be under glass. It also flourishes in pots of John Innes No.2 or a similar loam-based compost. Propagate by sowing fresh seed in autumn, as soon as it is ripe, or by dividing plants in spring. Keep the compost moist and feed monthly with a seaweed-based liquid fertiliser, and mulch with seaweed where possible. *Anchusa* can be propagated by seed, but if you want to be sure to maintain the intense blue flowers of named cultivars, you will need to take softwood or root cuttings from mid-autumn into winter. *Anchusa* are tap-rooted so will need a deep planting hole and shouldn't be moved during the growing season or you risk damaging the tap root, which rules out propagation by division during active growth. *Omphalodes* can be seed-sown in pots in a cold frame in spring or you can propagate by division or by cuttings in early spring. *Brunnera* can also be propagated by division or root cuttings in early spring or by root cuttings in winter. *Lithodora diffusa* should be propagated by taking semi-ripe cuttings from July until September.

Where to see and buy

- **Beth Chatto Gardens**
  Elmstead Market,
  Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB.
  Tel 01206 822007,
  bethchatto.co.uk
- **Bide-A-Wee Cottage Gardens**
  Stanton, Netherwitton,
  Morpeth, Northumberland
  NE65 8PR. Tel 01670 772004, bideawee.co.uk
- **Burncoose Nurseries**
  Gwennap, Redruth,
  Cornwall TR16 6BJ.
  Tel 01209 860316,
  burncoose.co.uk
- **National Collection of Omphalodes and Brunnera**
  Mrs J Pumfrey, Hearns
  House, Reading, Berkshire
  RG4 9DE. Tel 0118 972 2848.
  Open by appointment.

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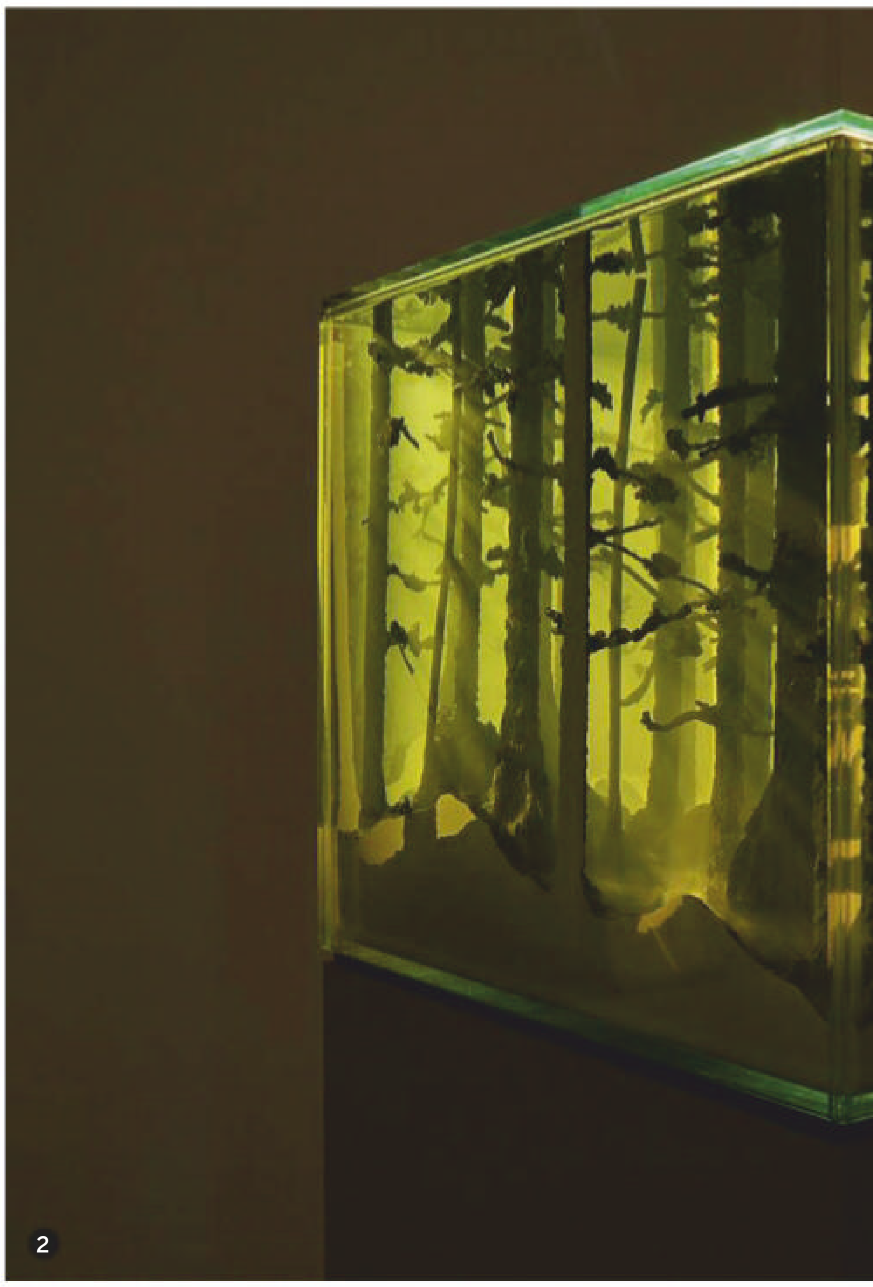
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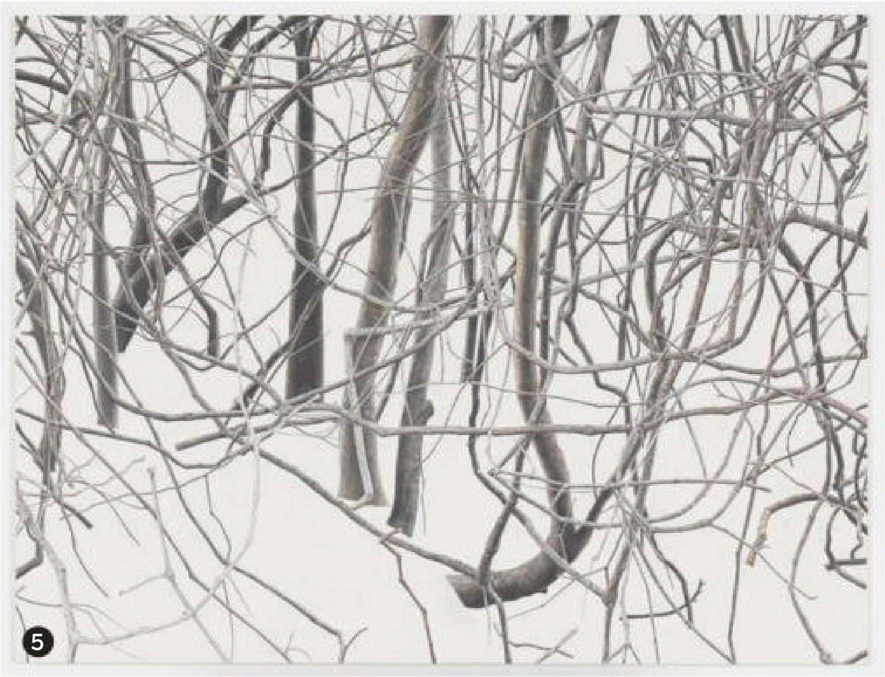
According to a 2015 study published in the journal *Nature*, at current rates of deforestation, in 600 years time there will be no trees left on the planet. The Hayward Gallery's latest exhibition explores new ways of representing trees so we can greater understand their importance

Among the trees

WORDS RALPH RUGOFF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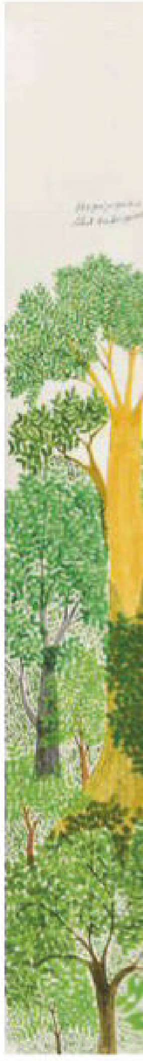

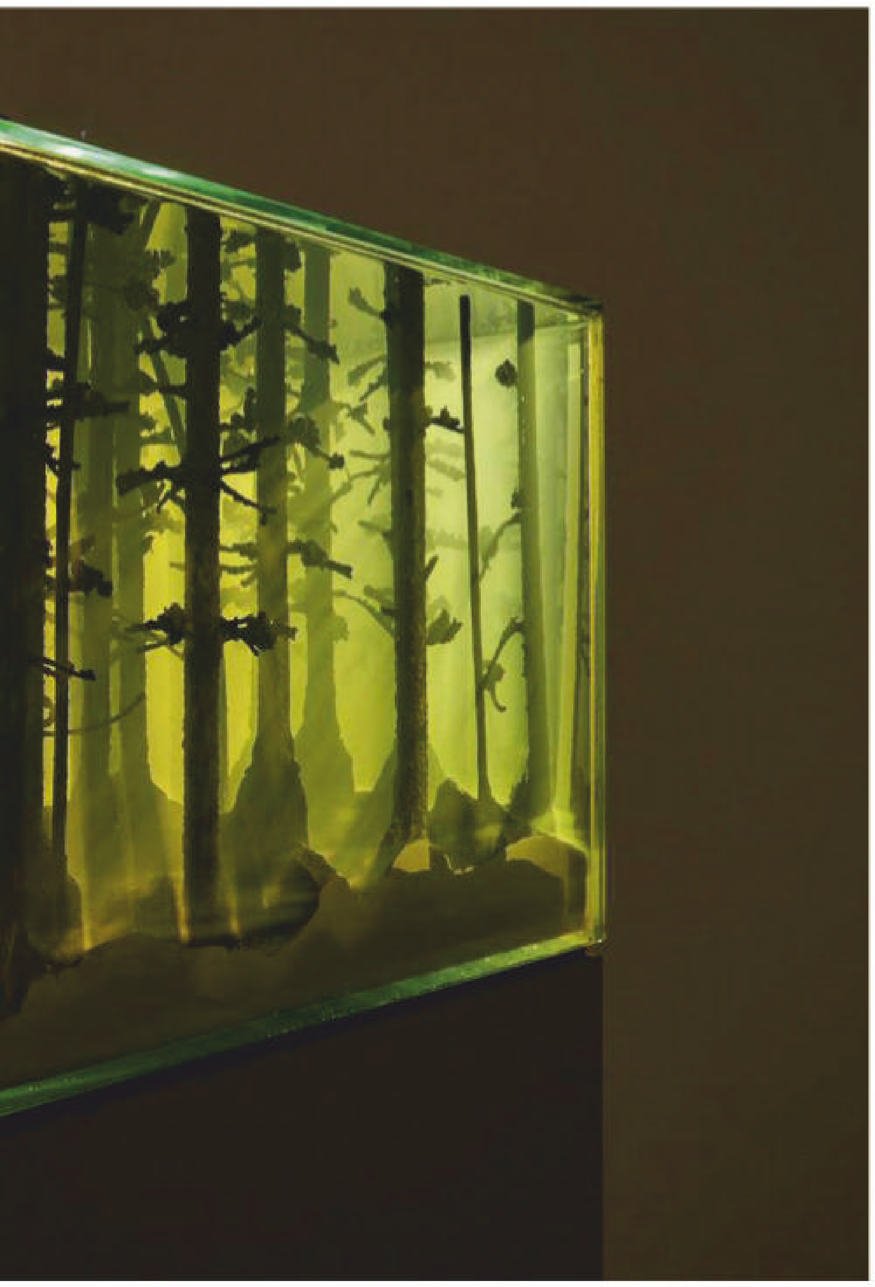

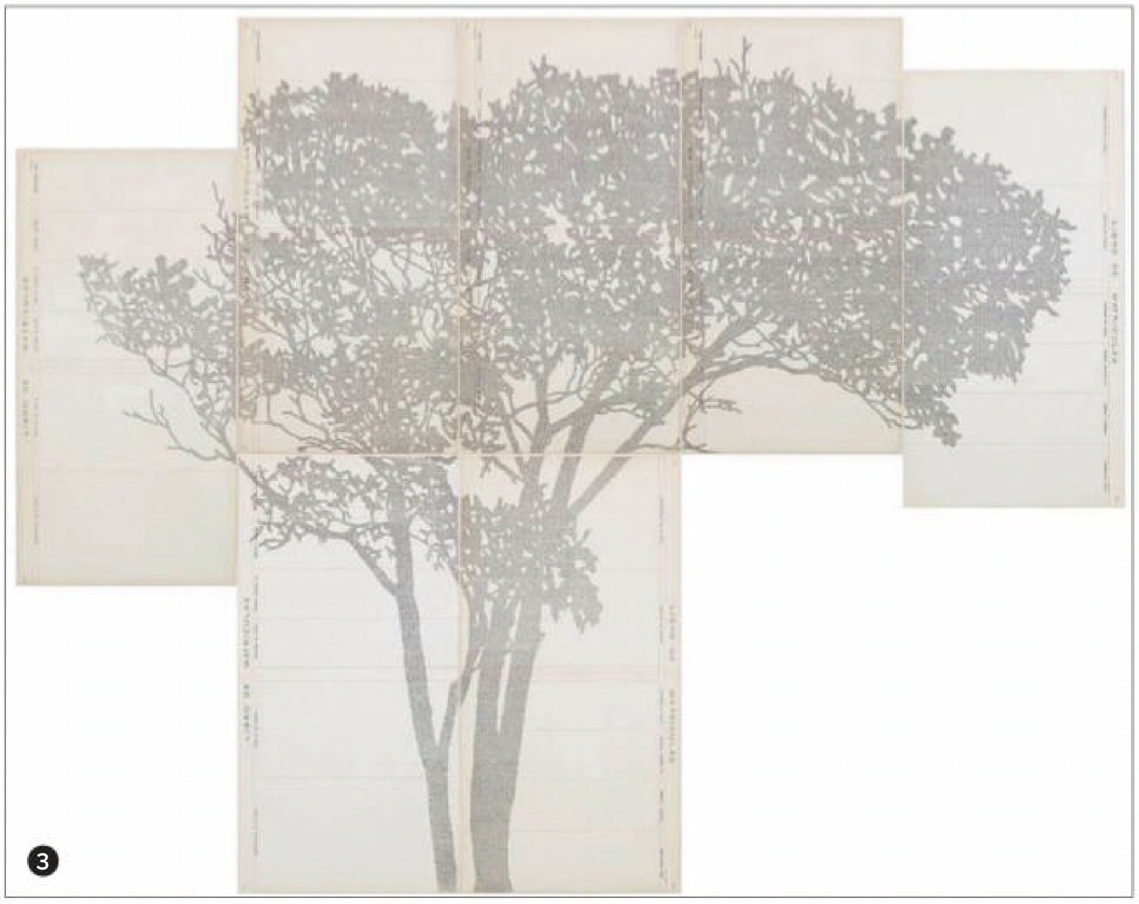
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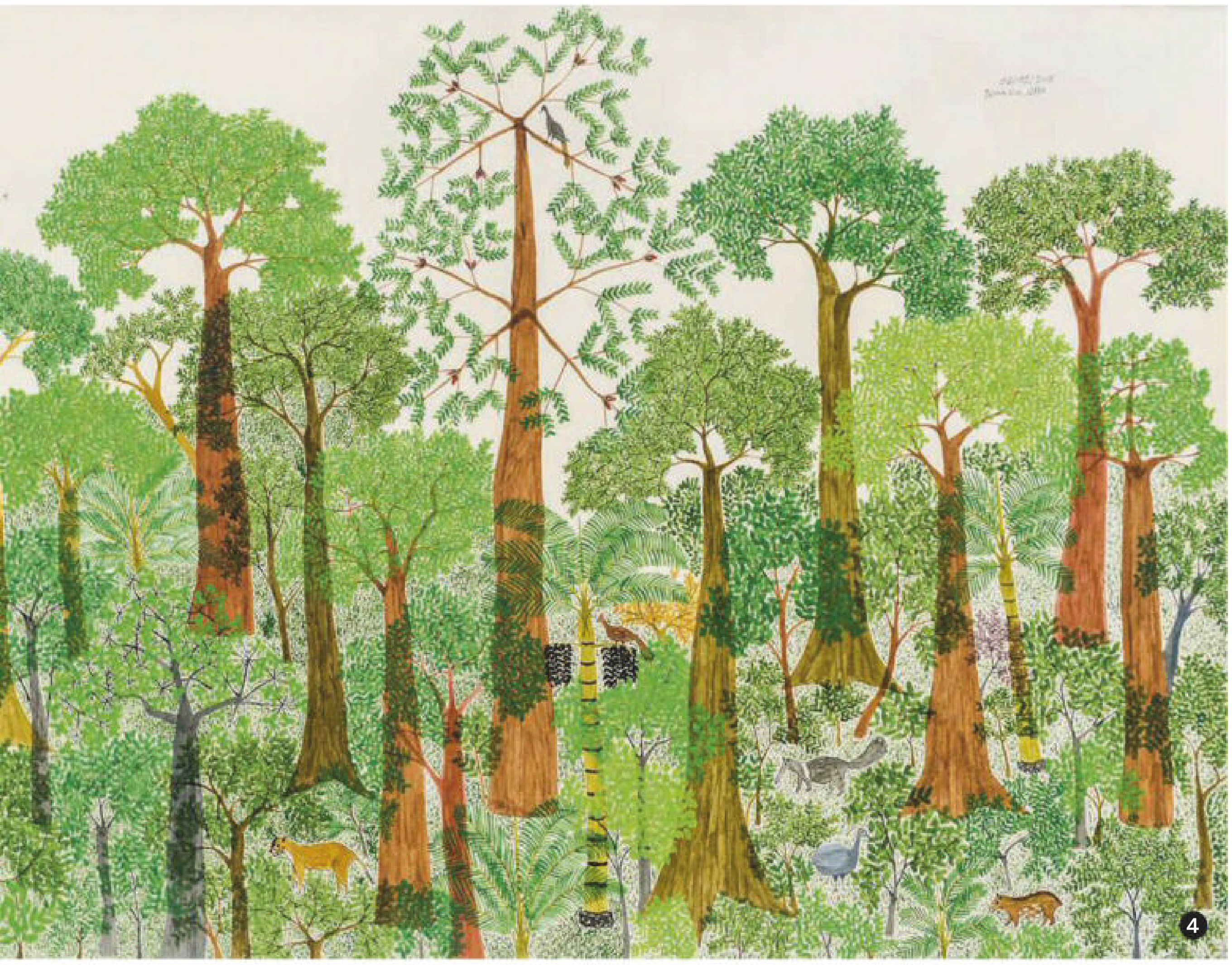
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Approximately 50 years ago, coinciding with the rise of the modern environmental movement, the subject of trees emerged as a motif in works by some of the most adventurous and influential artists of the time. In the years since, this engagement with trees has grown into a rich vein of contemporary art. While their art draws on the visually arresting character of trees – including their complex spatial and architectural forms – their work invites us to reimagine our relationships with trees and forests as both symbols and living organisms that have helped to shape human civilisation and continue to play an indispensable role in our lives and imaginations.

❶ **Yto Barrada** *Terrain Vague – Tanger (Vacant Lot – Tangier)*, 2001. Chromogenic print. © Yto Barrada 2020. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Polaris, Paris.
❷ **Mariele Neudecker** *And Then the World Changed Colour: Breathing Yellow*, 2019. Mixed media including water, acrylic, salt, fibreglass, spotlight. © Mariele Neudecker 2020. All rights reserved, DACS 2020. Courtesy Pedro Cera and the artist. Photo: Benjamin Jones.
❸ **Johanna Calle** *Perímetros (Nogal Andino)*, 2012. Typed text on vintage notarial ledger. © Archivos Pérez & Calle 2020. Courtesy Archivos Pérez & Calle. Photo: J.P. Gutiérrez.
❹ **Abel Rodriguez** *Terraza Alta II*, 2018. Acrylic and ink on paper. © the artist and Instituto de Visión 2020. Courtesy the artist and Instituto de Visión.
❺ **Toba Khedoori** *Untitled (branches 1)*, 2011-2012. Oil on linen. © Toba Khedoori 2020. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner. ▷

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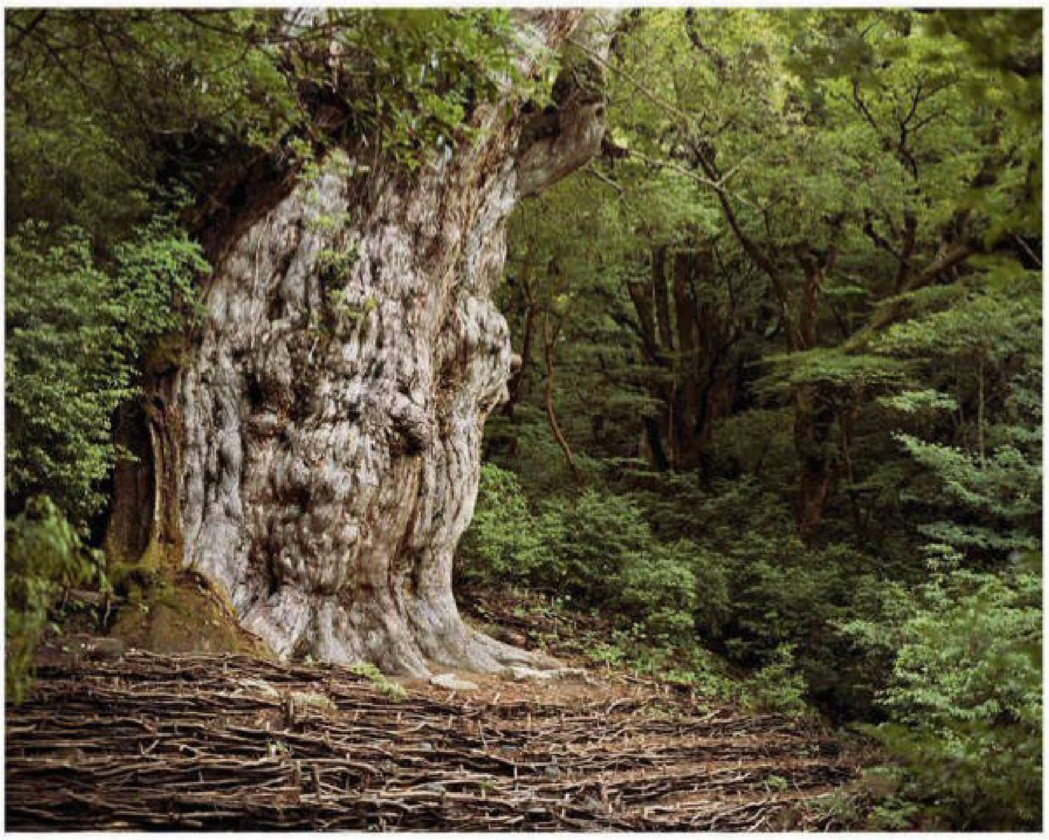

Jomon Sugi, Japanese Cedar #0704-002 (2,180-7,000 years old, Yaku Shima, Japan)

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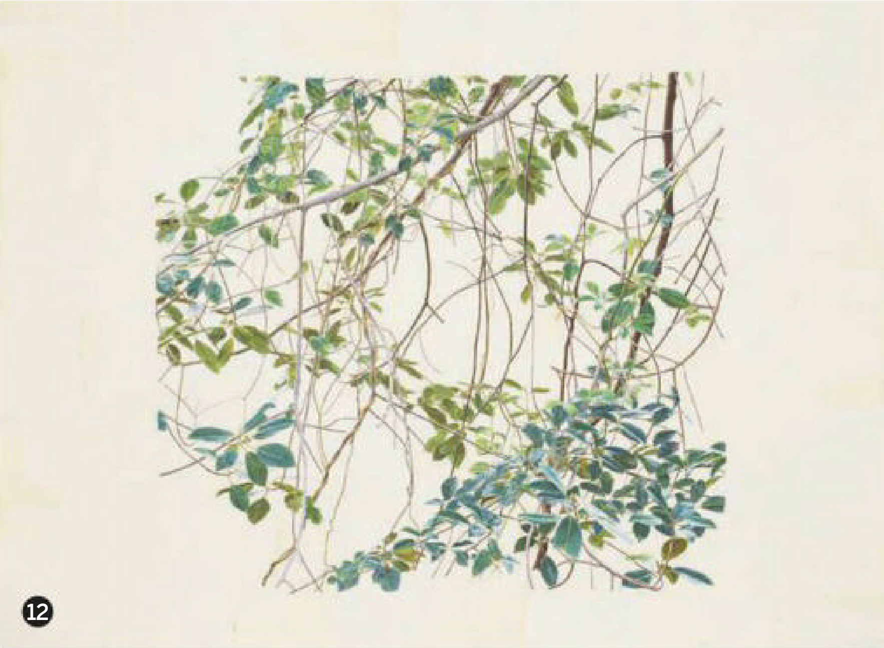

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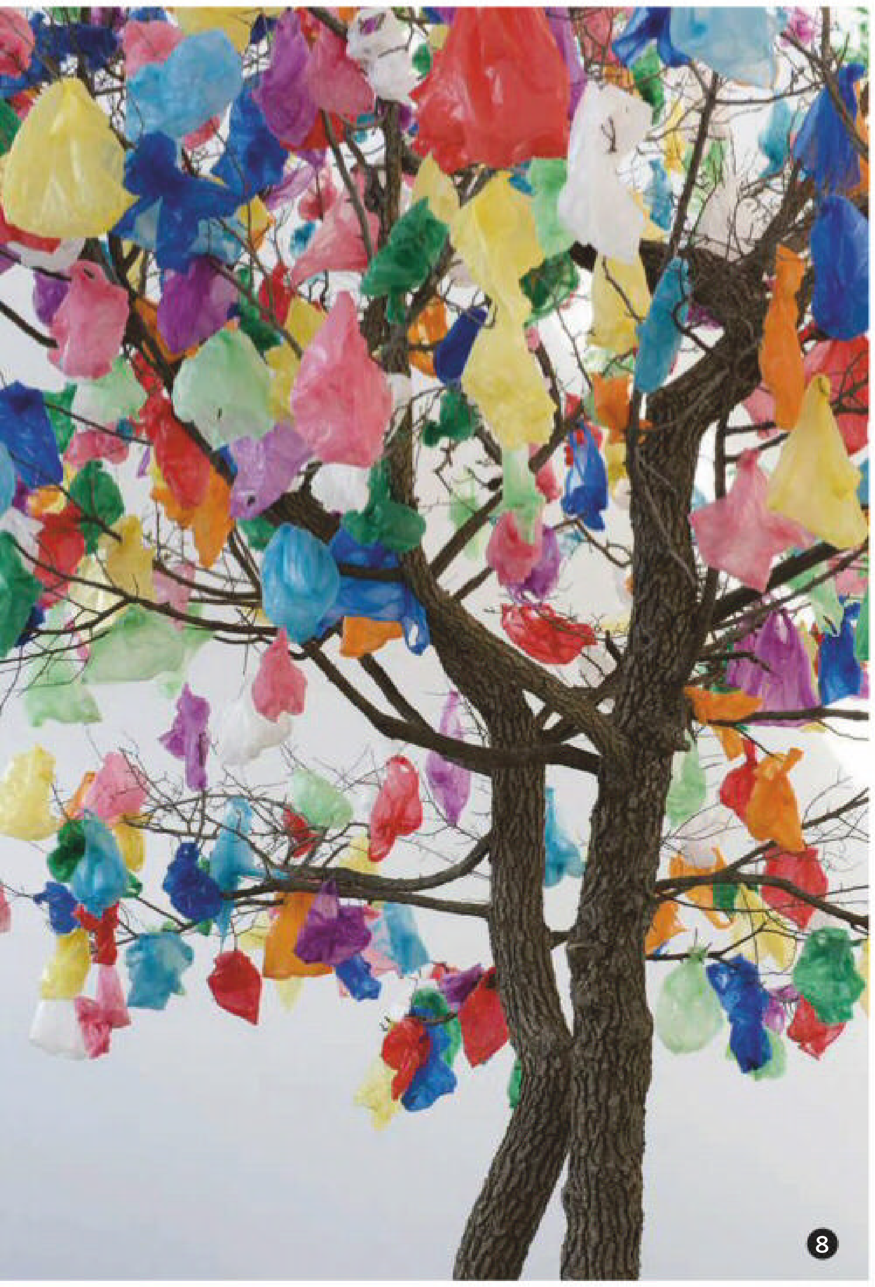

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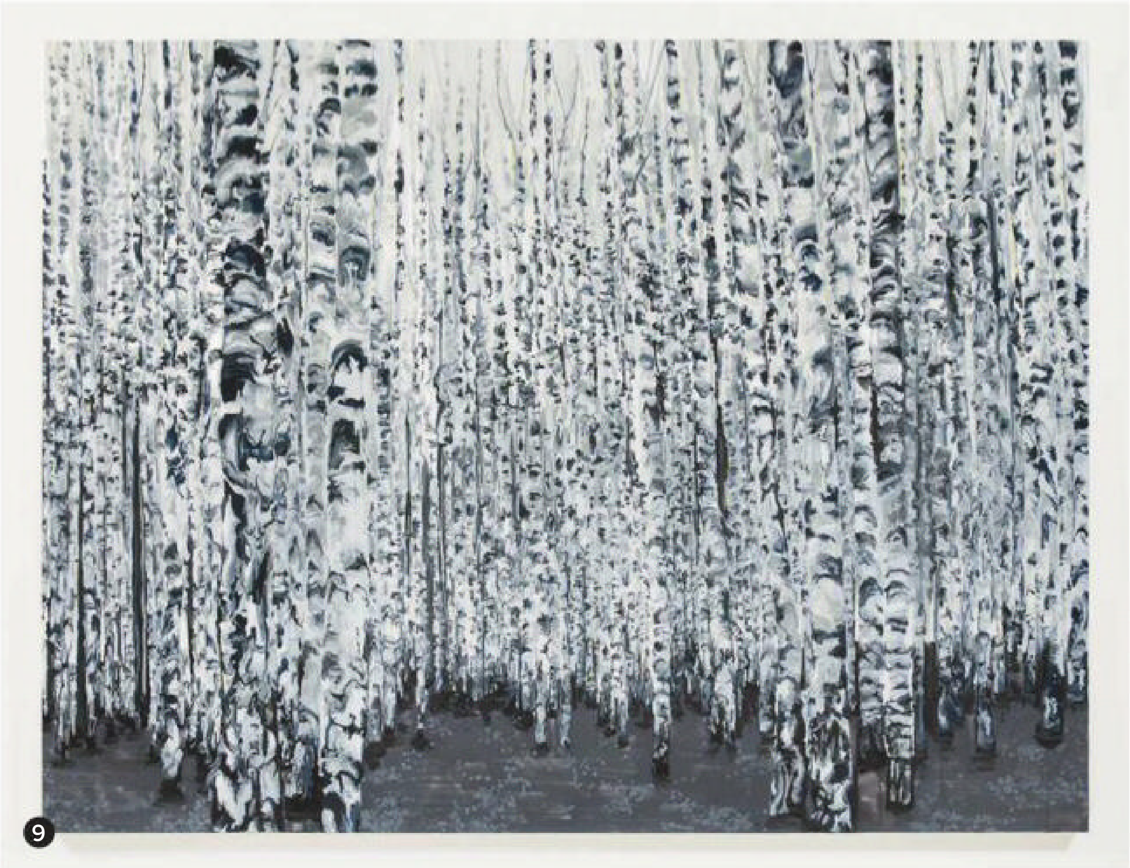

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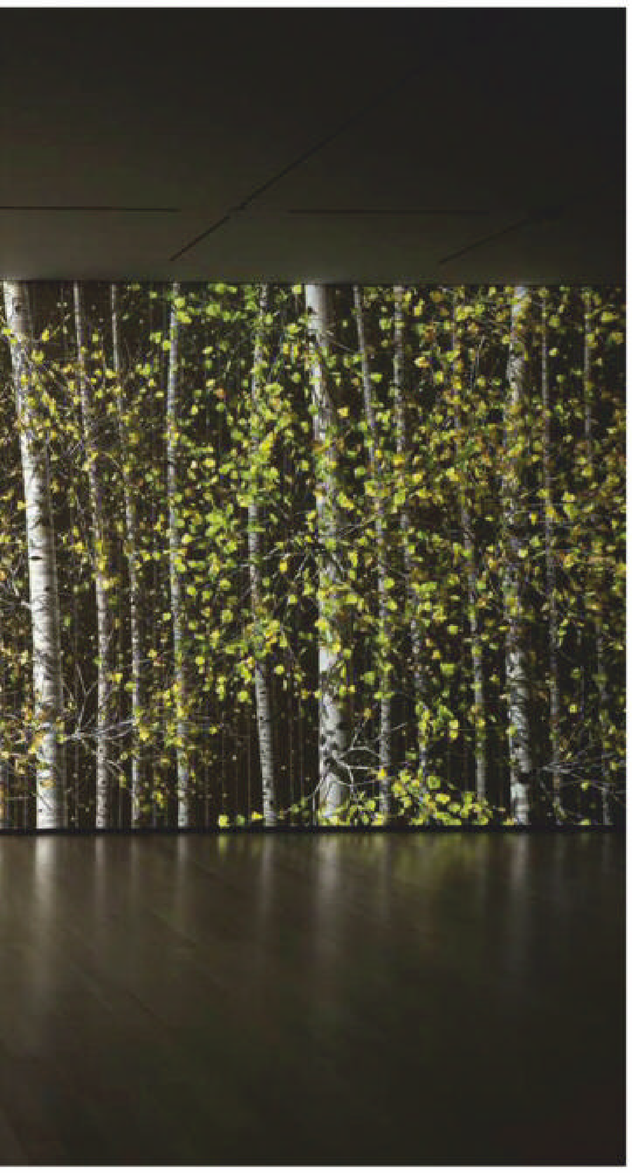

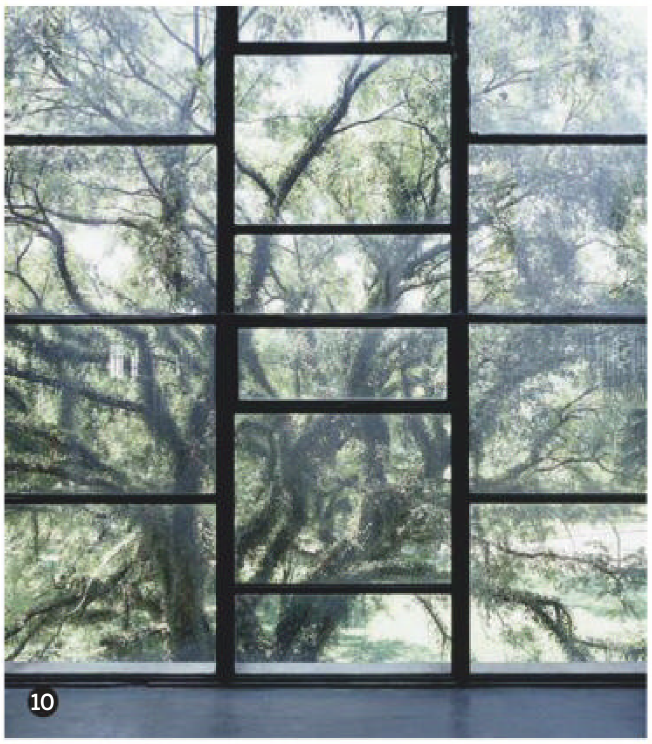

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⑥ **Zoe Leonard** *Untitled*, 2000. C-print. © Zoe Leonard 2020. Courtesy the artist, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne and Hauser & Wirth.
⑦ **Rachel Sussman** *Jomon Sugi, Japanese Cedar #0704-002 (2,180–7,000 years old); Yakushima, Japan*, 2004. Archival print. © the artist 2020. Courtesy the artist.
⑧ **Pascale Marthine Tayou** *Plastic Tree B*, 2010. Exhibition view REM(A)INDERS, Galleria Continua, Beijing, 2010. Wild pear-tree (*Pyrus pyraster*), plastic bags, Chinese pot, plants, flowers, soil. © the artist 2020. Courtesy the artist and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano / Beijing / Les Moulins / Habana. Photo: Oak Taylor-Smith.
⑨ **Kristen Everberg** *White Birch Grove, South (After Tarkovsky)*, 2008. Oil and enamel on canvas on panel. © the artist 2020. Courtesy the artist and 1301PE, Los Angeles. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.
⑩ **Luisa Lambri** *Untitled (Palácio de Indústria #01)*, 2003. Lambda print mounted on acrylic. © Luisa Lambri 2020. Courtesy the artist.
⑪ **Jennifer Steinkamp** *Blind Eye, 1*, 2018. Video installation. © the artist 2020. Courtesy greengrassi, London, Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong. Photo: Jennifer Steinkamp.
⑫ **Toba Khedoori** *Untitled*, 2018. Oil on waxed paper. © Toba Khedoori 2020. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner.

USEFUL INFORMATION
The exhibition *Among the Trees* is at the Hayward Gallery, London from 4 March to 17 May.
Hayward Gallery, London SE1 8XX. Tel 020 3879 9555, southbankcentre.co.uk
• Excerpt from *Among the Trees* catalogue (Hayward Publishing) by Ralph Rugoff, director of the Hayward Gallery.

When the doors opened at shows, throngs of people would make a sudden sally for its stand to purchase the rarest plants before they sold out

Most of Avon Bulbs' stock is grown on its Somerset site, the nursery's home for the past 30 years, though it takes its name from its third home overlooking the River Avon.

Gardeners will know Avon Bulbs as a regular of horticultural shows, where it is renowned for its excellent Gold medal displays. I remember its immaculate stands at the RHS London Shows in Vincent Square, the snowdrop displays were legendary – so carefully laid out as if plucked fresh from a woodland floor. When the doors opened to the show, throngs of people would make a sudden sally for its stand in a bid to purchase the rarest, most choice plants before they sold out. At the RHS Chelsea Flower Show the stands were more luxurious with drifts of tulips, lily-of-the-valley, gladioli and alliums (to name but a few), each flower in flawless condition. It's no surprise the nursery has won 30 RHS Chelsea Gold medals, in addition to Gold at Malvern, Birmingham and Hampton Court Palace.

Avon Bulbs is a long-standing, family run, mail-order nursery specialising in bulbs for the flower garden. Owned by Chris Ireland-Jones and managed with Alan Street, it's located near South Petherton in Somerset, a stone's throw from the famous garden of the late Margery Fish at East Lambrook.

The nursery was originally set up by Walter Stag, a former UK representative for the bulb giant Van Tubergen, in 1979, and Alan joined soon afterwards. It moved twice before settling near Trowbridge on a site overlooking the River Avon, after which the nursery was named. Chris bought the nursery from Walter in 1987, but the site was proving to be difficult, and after the glasshouses were flattened by a gale, a move seemed to be in order. Fortuitously, in the early 1990s, Chris was told about a small dairy farm, with seven acres, cattle sheds and heavy clay soil, that was coming up for auction and he bought it. "It was less than ideal for a bulb nursery," he remembers. "Alan had wanted something much lighter for his snowdrops. There wasn't a tree on the place, so no shade for woodland bulbs."

Alan Street and Chris Ireland-Jones with a selection of Avon Bulbs spring flowers.

Thirty years on it is a very different scene. "We have quite a lot of trees now, more shade and a lot more staff," says Chris. Snowdrops now carpet a new woodland floor. "We don't dig from here," says Chris, "we just let them seed out." Instead the nursery cultivates most of its snowdrop bulbs for sale using specialist cold frames, although as Alan points out over the years they have found quite a few lovely seedlings in the woodland. If you paw through the beautifully illustrated catalogue, you will see the copse has provided a bounty of new treasures, including *Galanthus* 'Midas', a snowdrop with markings that turn golden yellow shortly after opening, and *G.* 'The Wizard', which has green markings on the interior and exterior of the flower. Snowdrops, may have become the nursery's trademark plant, but it also offers a considerable range of excellent hardy garden plants that cater for all seasons and situations, including tulips, alliums and lilies for the mixed border; anemones, scillas and erythroniums suitable for naturalising through the woodland; and crocuses, narcissi and fritillaries for early colour in meadows and lawns. Much of the stock is grown on-site in stock beds and cold frames, the large glasshouses provide warmth and shelter from the elements, and a cold store is used for holding show plants. As Avon Bulbs has grown over the years, so has its reputation for quality and faultless displays on the show bench. □

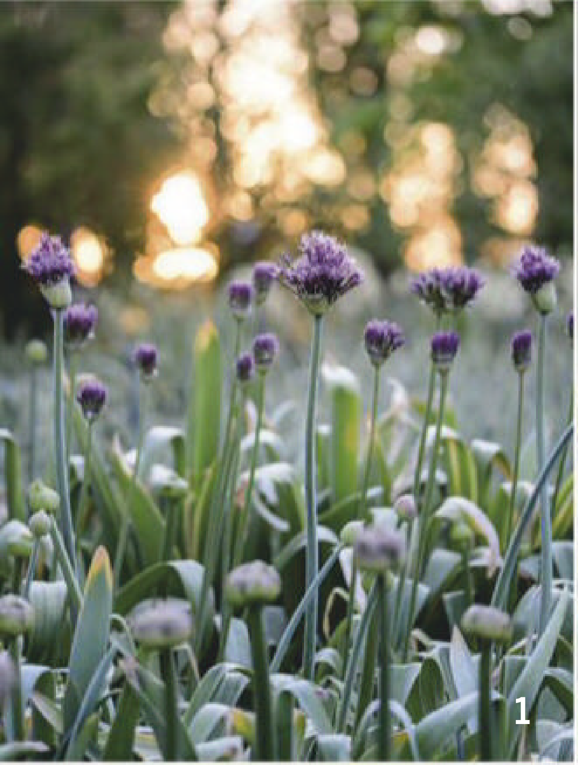
USEFUL INFORMATION.
Address Burnt House Farm, Mid Lambrook, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5HE. **Tel** 01460 242177.
Web avonbulbs.co.uk **Open** Mail-order only, but see website for details of shows the nursery is attending this year.

Turn the page for 36 key plants from Avon Bulbs ▷

Show stoppers

Well known for its award-wining displays at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, Avon Bulbs in Somerset offers a range of stunning plants for all seasons

WORDS MATTHEW REESE PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM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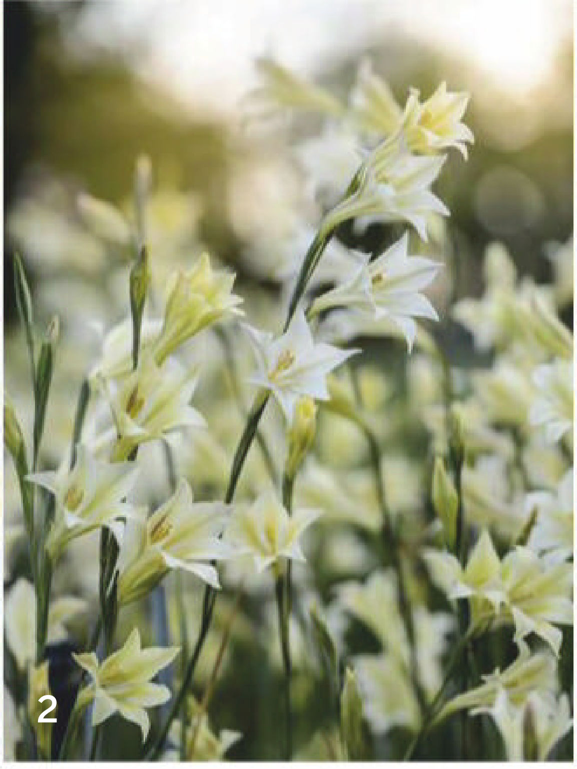
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36 KEY PLANTS FROM AVON BULBS

1 *Allium* 'Purple Rain'
Probably the best allium in a recent RHS trial, Increases quickly with long-lasting flowers of a particularly good purple-pink colour. 90cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b†.

2 *Gladiolus tristis*
Forms clumps of fine foliage atop which night-scented, creamy yellow-throated flowers are produced. Good when grown in a pot. 80cm. RHS H4, USDA 4a-8b.

3 *Scilla peruviana*
A plant that favours a sunny, sheltered site with free-draining soil. During the winter it makes whirls of fleshy leaves from which squat, conical racemes of flowers are produced. 30cm. RHS H4, USDA 4a-8b.

4 *Allium siculum* subsp. *dioscoridis* x *A. tripedale*
Known as Sicilian honey garlic, this robust perennial produces loose clusters of flesh-pink bells atop sturdy stems. 1m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

5 *Cypripedium* Gisela gx
A hardy, hybrid Lady's-slipper orchid with claret-stained cream lip, backed by three dark-claret petals. Best in humus-rich, but not soggy, soil. 45cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-7b.

6 *Narcissus fernandesii* var. *cordubensis*
With flowers similar to *N. jonquilla*, but slightly larger, this is a robust garden perennial that will naturalise in damp meadows. 25cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

7 *Camassia* 'Blue Heaven'
A very good perennial bulb that will clump up even in meadow conditions. Thin stems are topped with racemes of pale-blue, starry flowers. 80cm. RHS H4, USDA 3a-8b.

8 *Narcissus* 'Hawera'
A pretty, scented narcissus with nodding flowers in a shade of cool, primrose yellow, and rush-like foliage. Excellent for naturalising. 20cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

9 *Cerinthe major* 'Purpurascens'
A delightful annual borage that forms mounds of silvery-grey foliage and petrol-purple cymes from which tubular, purple flowers are produced. 50cm. RHS H3.

10 *Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus*
Pure-white flowers with shallow yellow, red-rimmed cups. It is strongly scented and an excellent cut flower. Doesn't mind heavy, wet soils. 40cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.

11 *Muscari aucheri* 'Ocean Magic'
A well-behaved grape hyacinth that is good for naturalising in dry, sunny sites. It makes small spikes of globular, scented, pale-blue flowers. 20cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

12 *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* 'Alba'
The white form of the English bluebell and very good for naturalising. The scented, tubular bell flowers are carried on one-sided, arching racemes. 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

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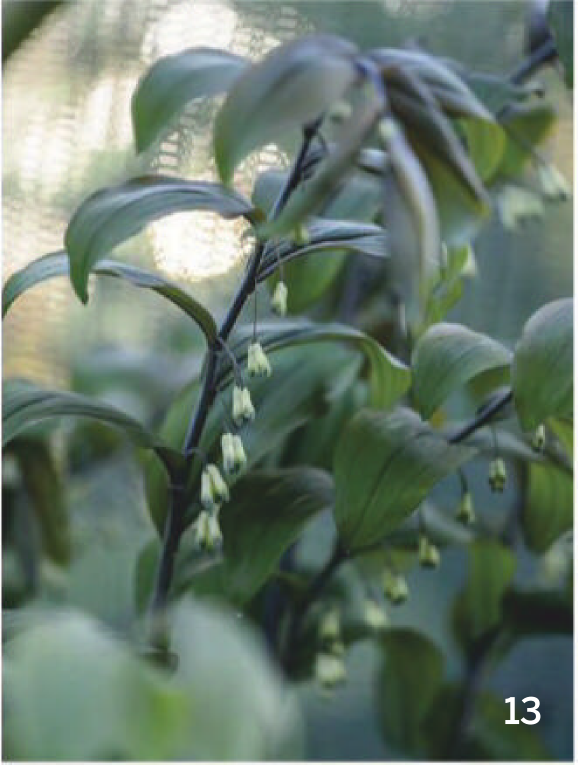
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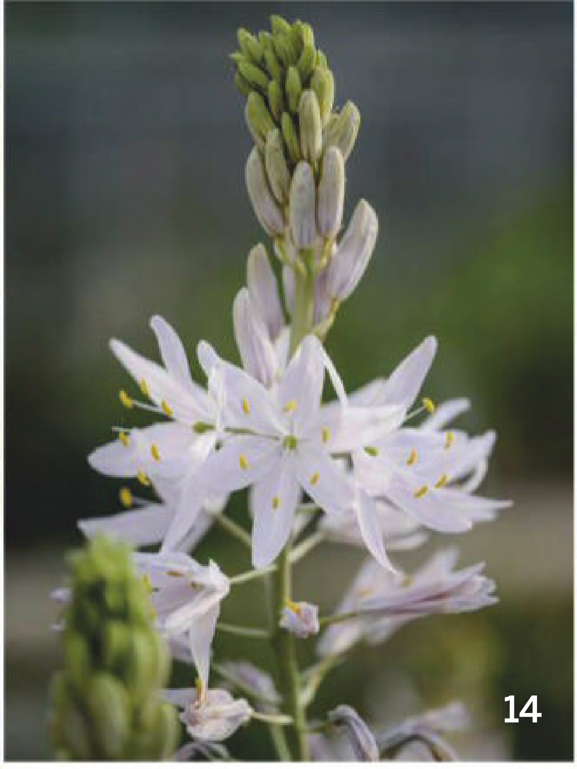
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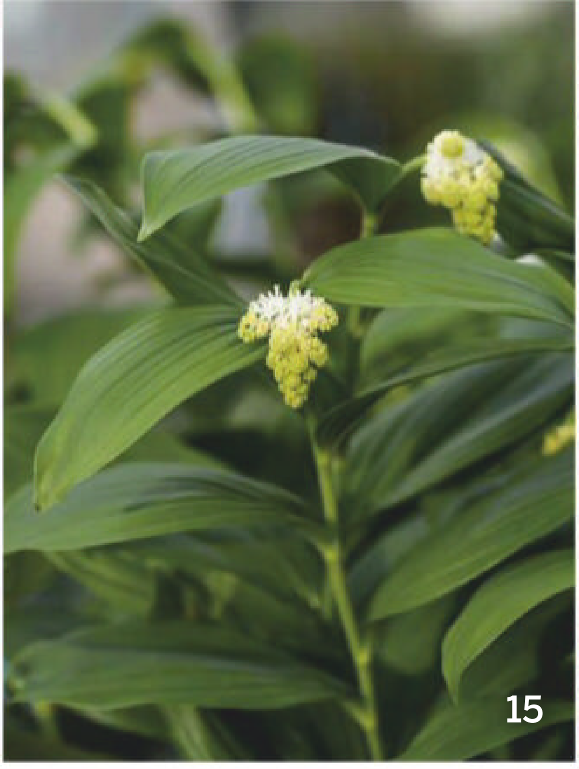
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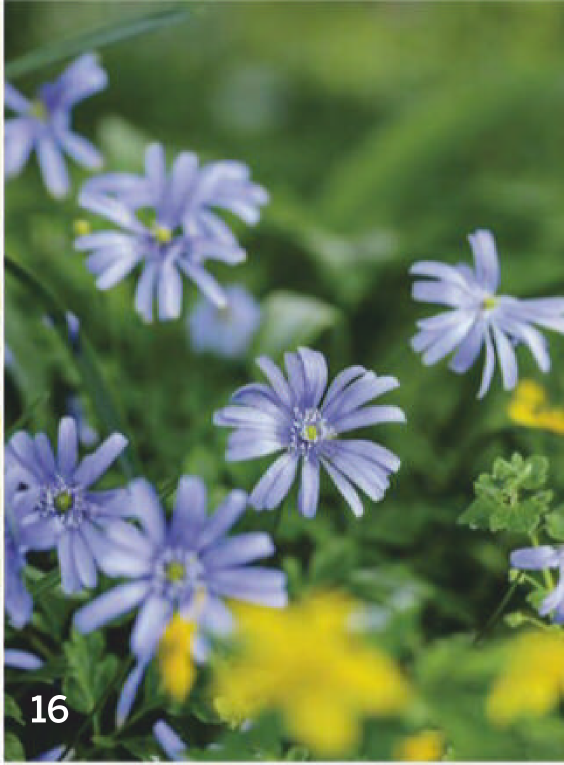
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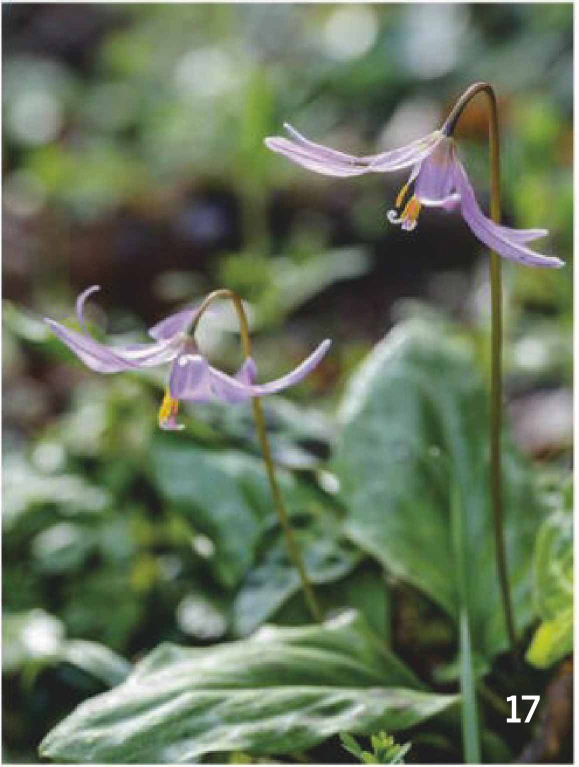
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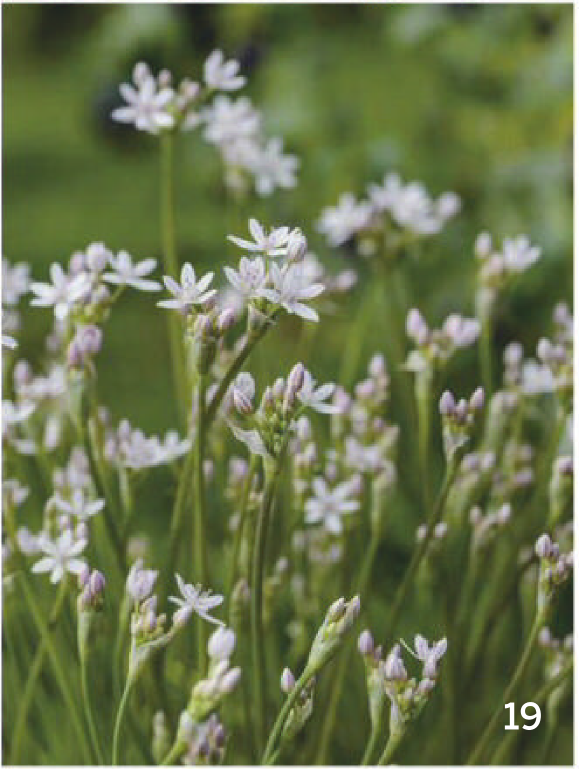
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13 *Polygonatum* x *hybridum* ‘Betberg’
A wonderful smoky form of Solomon’s seal with arching stems and foliage held in ranks. Slim, pendent white flowers are produced from the leaf axils. 80cm. RHS H7.

14 *Camassia leichtlinii* Avon’s Stellar Group (pink selection)
Selected from a batch of seed-grown camassias for its good pink flowers. Plant in moist soils, not too dry, in either border or meadow conditions. 90cm. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

15 *Maianthemum racemosum*
This early flowering woodland perennial makes dense clumps of arching, divaricating stems with pleated foliage that terminate in sprays of tiny, scented, white flowers. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

16 *Anemone apennina*
One of the nicest of the perennial anemones. It makes drifts of dainty, blue anemone flowers atop fine foliage. Prefers rich soils and semi-shade. 20cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

17 *Erythronium revolutum*
One of the very best trout lilies in the garden, and once established will build large colonies of marbled foliage and pink Turk’s cap flowers. 30cm. RHS H5.

18 *Mathiasella bupleuroides* ‘Green Dream’
A dramatic member of the carrot family from Mexico, with rangy, glaucous-pink stems topped with long-lasting green flowers that turn pink with age. 1m. RHS H5.

19 *Allium hyalinum*
From the foothills of the Californian Sierra Nevada where it grows in moist soils that dry out during summer. Produces starry, pink-flushed, white flowers in loose umbels. 30cm. RHS H5.

20 *Fritillaria acmopetala*
Good in the open garden, this Mediterranean fritillary produces pendent, flared bells with a green ground colour and darker brown shading. 35cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 5a-8b.

21 *Fritillaria meleagris* var. *unicolor* subvar. *alba*
A white form of our native snake’s head fritillary with large, nodding, bell-shaped flowers. The white form is more conspicuous in meadows than the type. 30cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.

22 *Primula veris*
A cowslip with bunched, one-side umbels of yellow flowers. A native of chalk downland. It will naturalise freely in a loose meadow sward. 20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

23 *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* ‘Maybelle’
Flowering three weeks later than the type, and with darker flowers, this makes a useful addition to the garden in late spring when colour can be wanting. 60cm. RHS H4, USDA 5a- 9b.

24 *Fritillaria meleagris*
One of the prettiest of our native wildflowers. It is a bulbous perennial that prefers moist, rich soils where it will self-seed. 30cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

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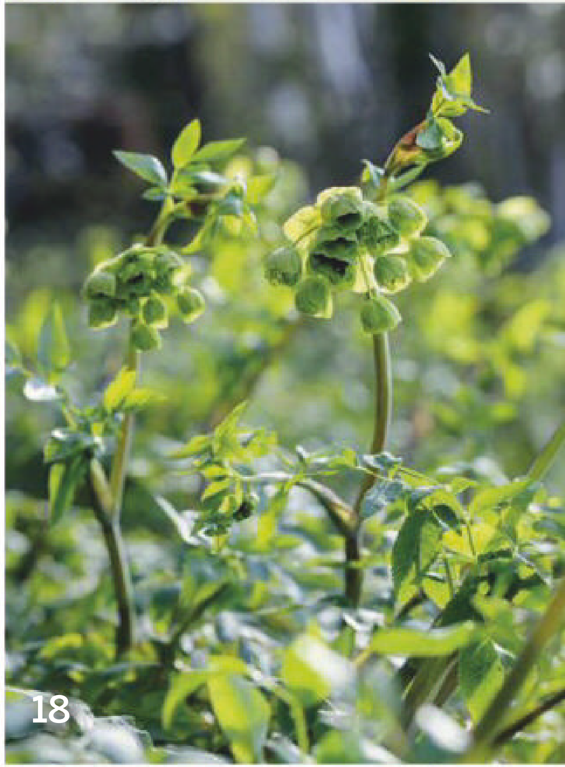
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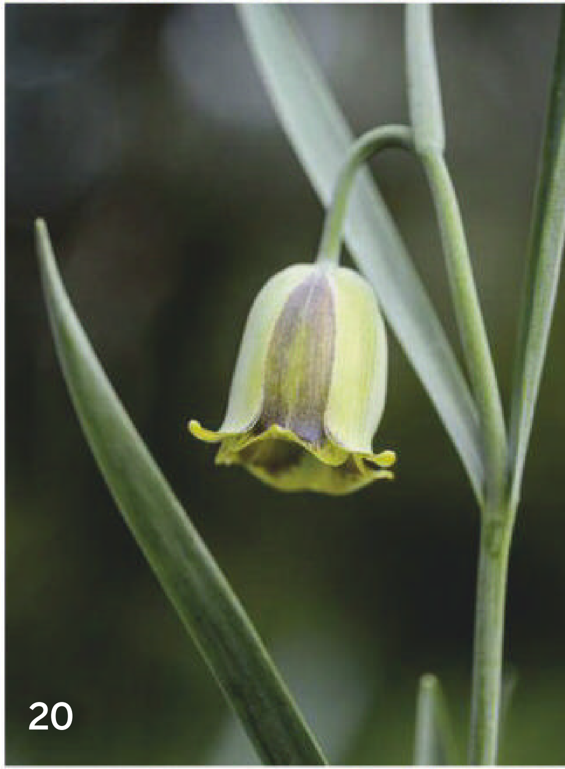
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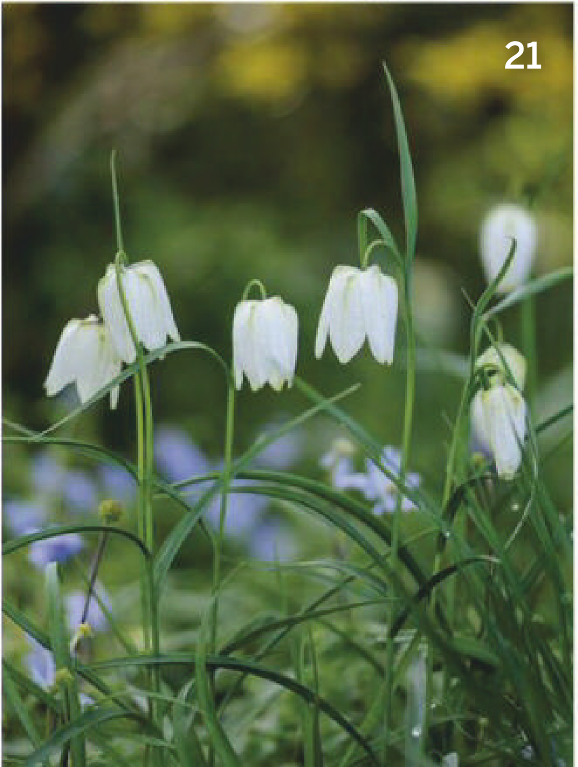
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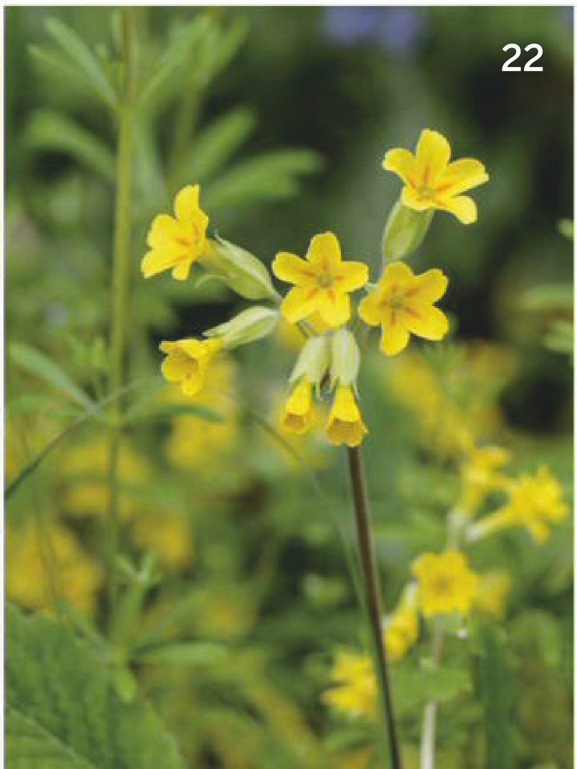
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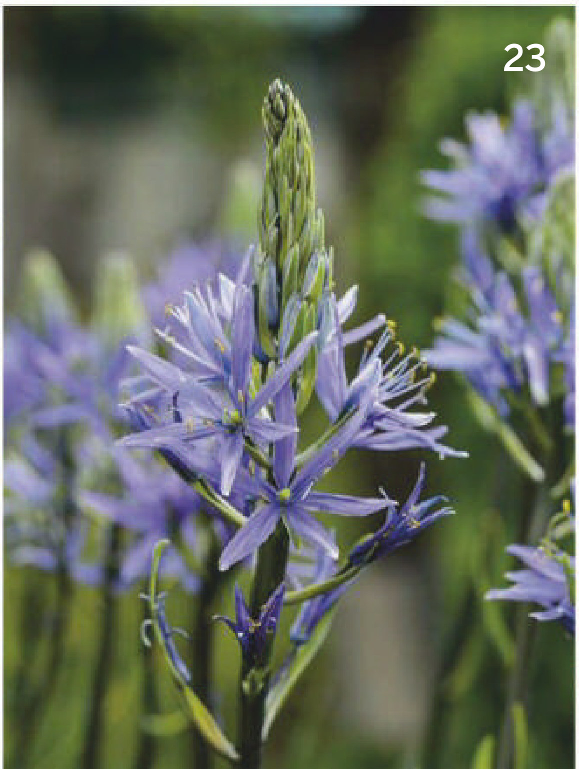
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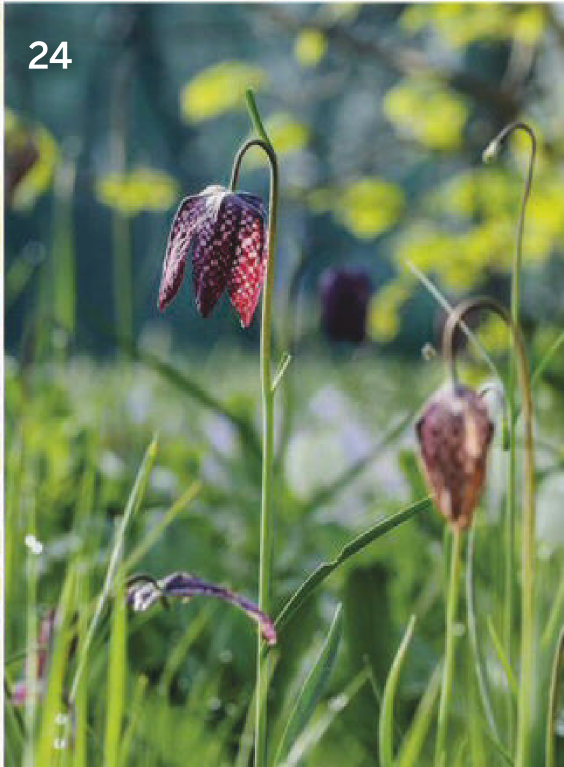
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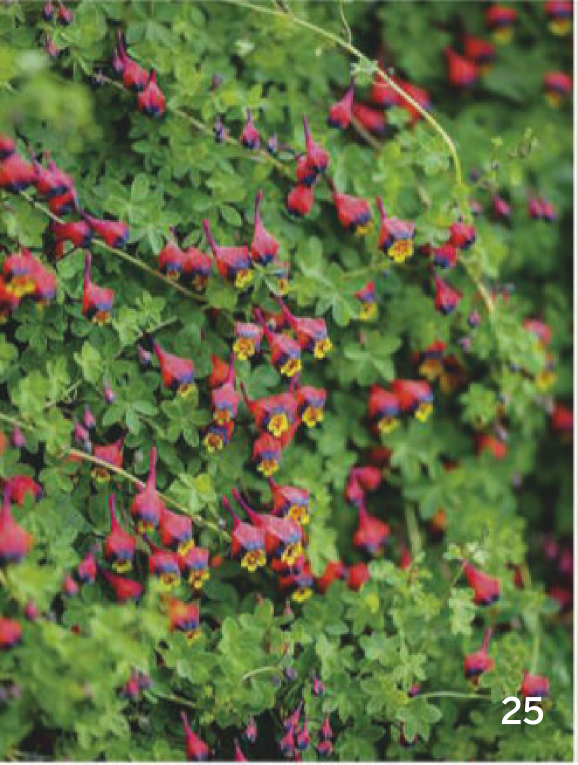
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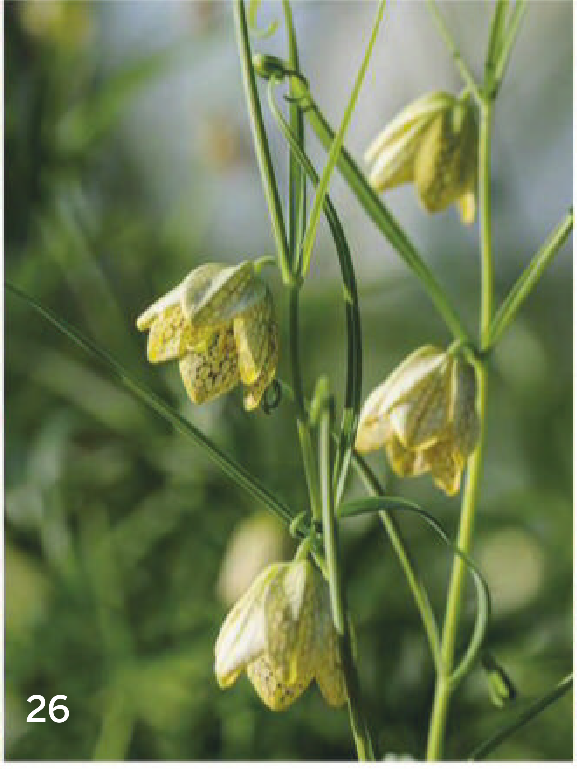
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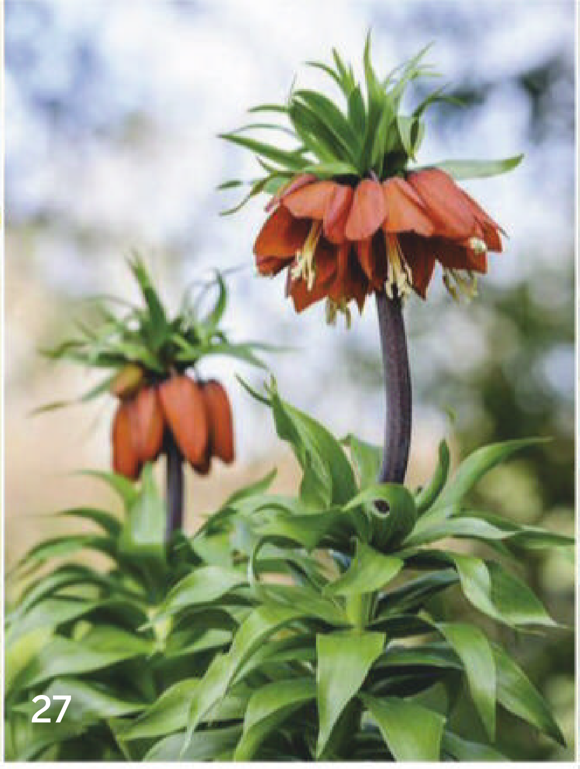
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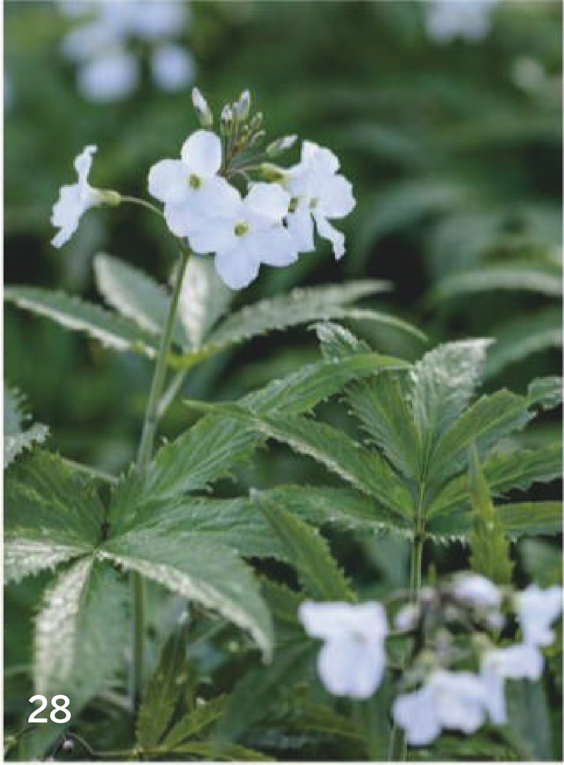
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36 KEY PLANTS CONTINUED

25 *Tropaeolum tricolor*

An alpine nasturtium from Chile that makes thin, climbing tendril growths in winter, then in spring bears masses of small, tricoloured flowers. 1.3m. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 8a-10b.

26 *Fritillaria thunbergii*

A tall, rangy plant producing milky-green, often mottled, conical flowers above thin, glaucous-green foliage. The topmost leaves are twining and tendril-like. Be sure to plant bulbs deeply. 80cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

27 *Fritillaria imperialis* ‘William Rex’

A selection of a garden plant that has been popular for over 400 years. This deep-orange form has stout, dark stems with a notable bushy top. 75cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

28 *Cardamine heptaphylla*

A herbaceous perennial woodlander from Europe that forms low-growing drifts of pinnate foliage with toothed leaflets, above which loose racemes of chalky-white flowers are produced. 30cm. RHS H7.

29 *Lunaria annua* ‘Chedglow’

A form of the common honesty with dark-purple foliage and sprays of purple flowers. It will self-seed, but seedlings can vary. Faded, greener forms should be weeded out. 50cm. RHS H6.

30 *Lathraea clandestina*

A harmless, parasitic plant with no chlorophyll. This plant gains all its sustenance from the roots of its host, which could be willow or poplar. 15cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

31 *Fritillaria raddeana*

Similar in appearance to *F. imperialis*, but generally of smaller stature with very pale primrose flowers. A good garden plant for a sunny site with good drainage. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

32 *Scilla liliohyacinthus*

Mid-blue flowers are produced in loose, delicate racemes above smart glossy green foliage. It thrives in woodland conditions where it will make sheets of colour. 25cm. RHS H6.

33 *Ipheion* ‘Alberto Castillo’

A very good starflower that creates drifts of short, strap-shaped leaves above which hover upward facing, large white flowers. Prefers a sunny site. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

34 *Lunaria annua* ‘Corfu Blue’

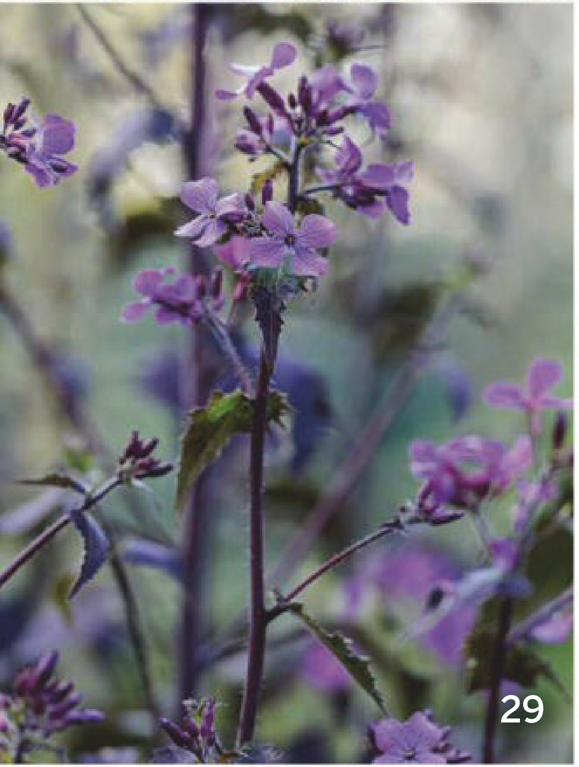
Normally a biennial species, but this beautiful form behaves as a short-lived, self-seeding perennial. Its violet-coloured flowers are followed by lovely papery seedheads. 50cm. RHS H5.

35 *Tulipa* ‘Peppermintstick’

A good selection of a beautiful species with slender, elegant, white and pink-backed flowers that open in the sunshine to reveal white, six-petaled stars. 30cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

36 *Lunaria annua* var. *albiflora*

A white form of the common purple honesty. A biennial that will self-seed throughout the garden. Looks good with late tulips and early alliums. 60cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.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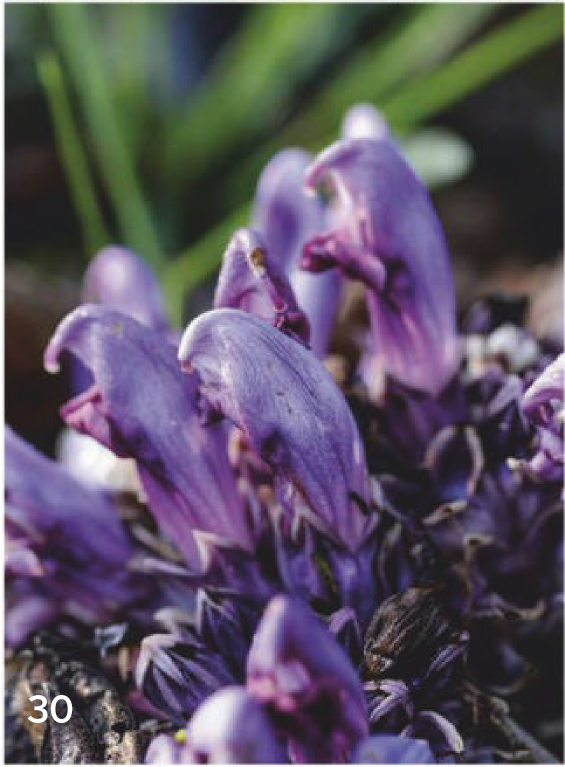
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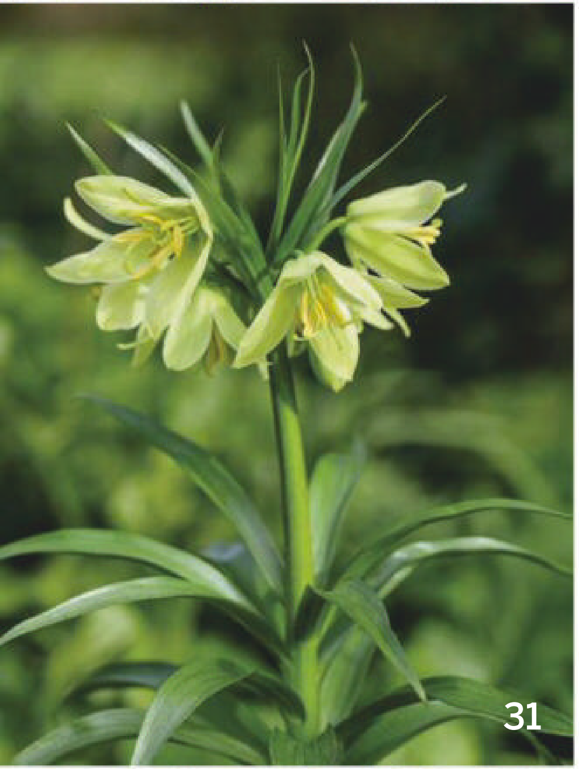
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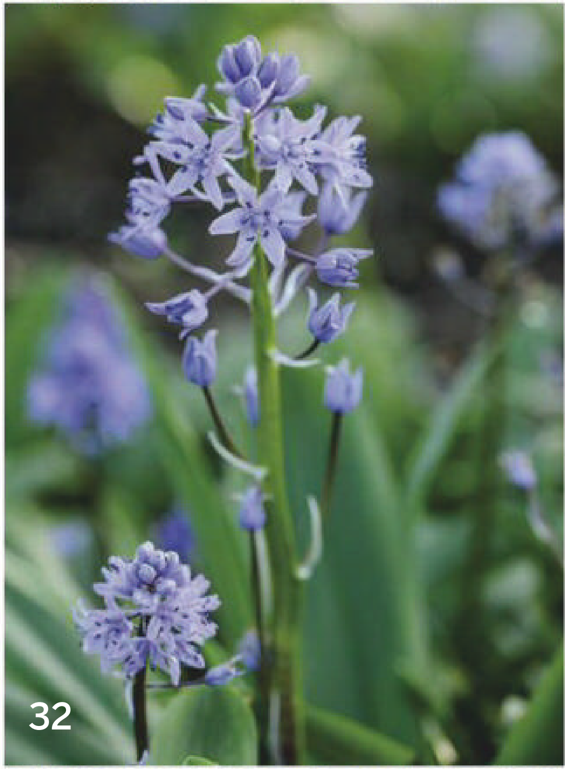
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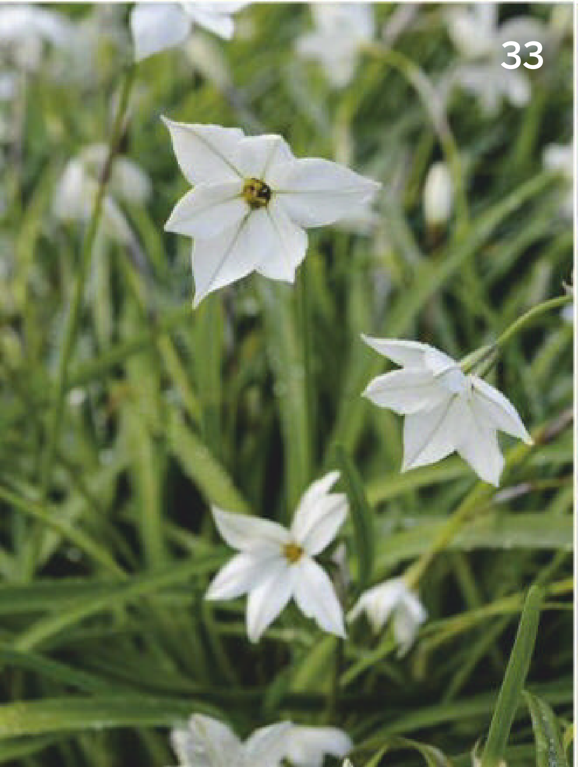
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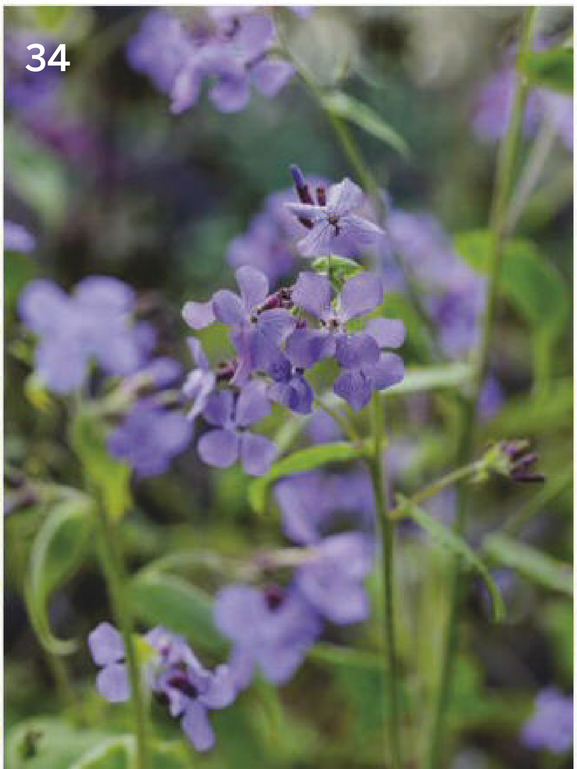
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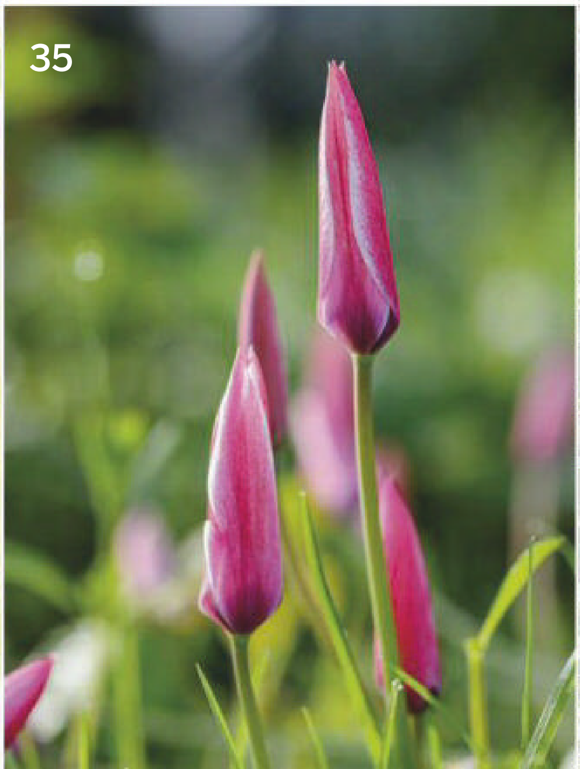
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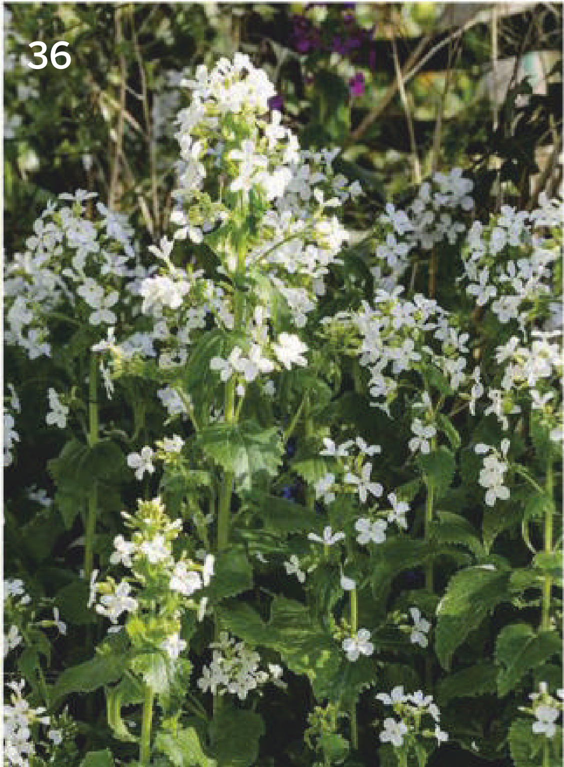
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The nursery's show displays are legendary – so carefully laid out as if plucked fresh from a woodland floor

Allium 'Purple Rain' grow in the stock beds around the Avon Bulbs site in Somerset. Although renowned for its spring bulbs, the nursery offers a wide range of flowering plants, including irises, lilies, anemones, erythroniums and gladioli.

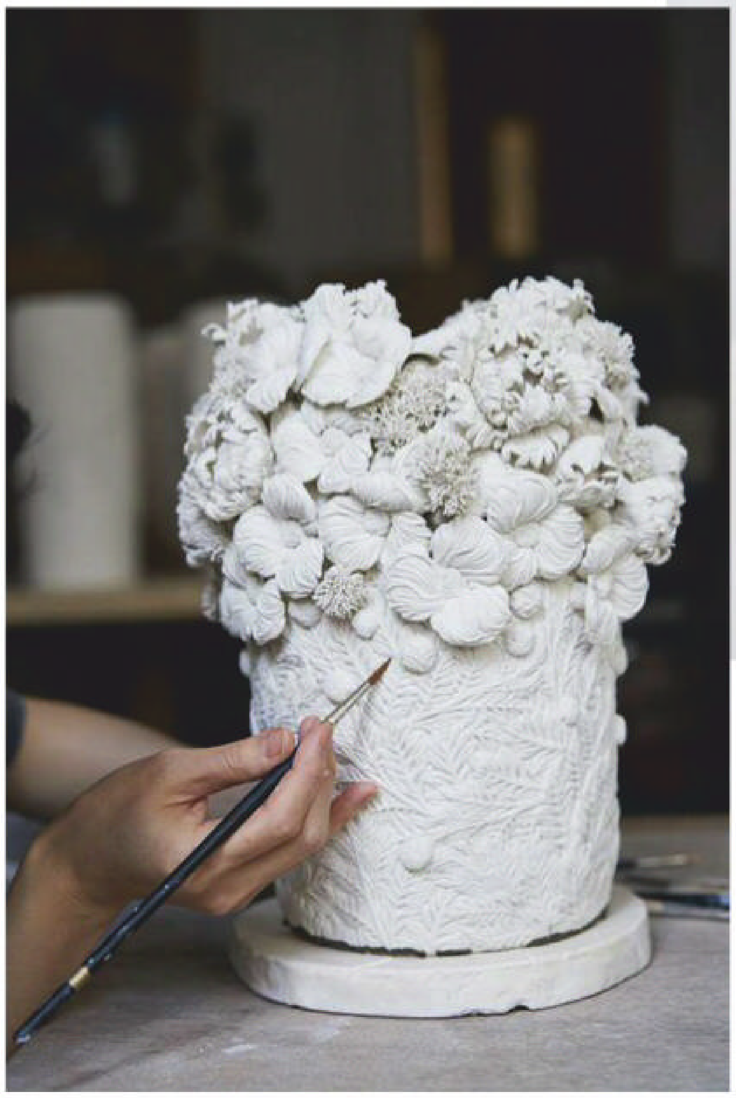
Poetry in porcelain

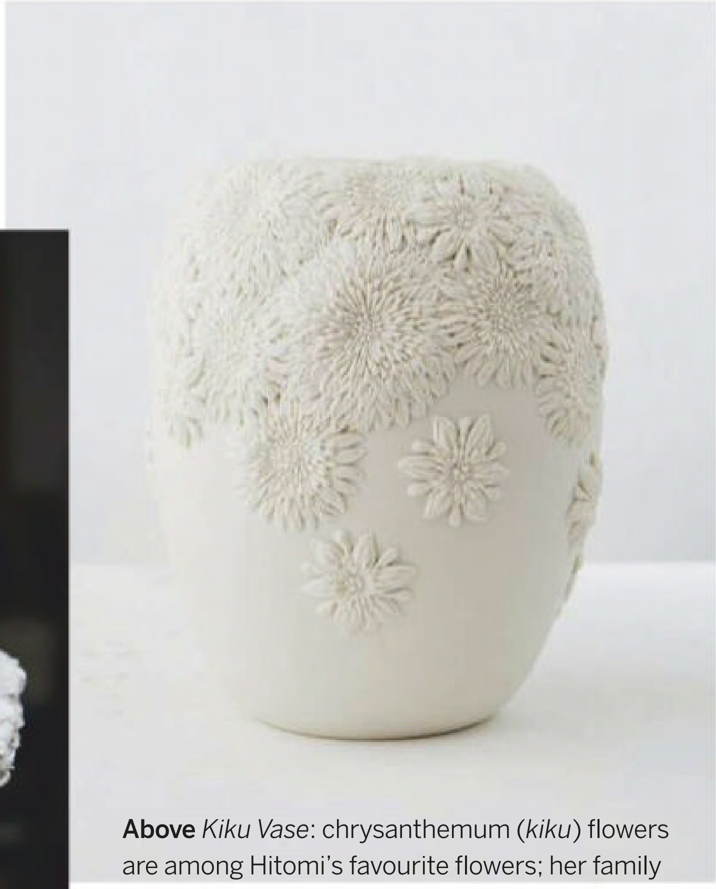
Ceramicist Hitomi Hosono brings precision, delicacy and an intuitive touch to her intricate floral creations etched in chalky-white clay

WORDS **DIANA WOOLF** PHOTOGRAPHS **LISA LINDER**

This image Hitomi grew up in the Japanese countryside and much of the inspiration for her intricate, flower-encrusted vases comes from her childhood memories spent playing in the forest and her mother's garden.

Left *Keyaki and Sakura Pool*, a vase decorated with delicate cherry blossoms (*sakura*) and leaves from the *keyaki* tree (*Zelkova serrata*) that grows near Hitomi's home in Japan.





Above *Kiku Vase*: chrysanthemum (*kiku*) flowers are among Hitomi's favourite flowers; her family used to pick them from their garden to put on their Buddhist altar as an offering.

Left Hitomi attaches the sprigs by applying water to the surface of the vase with a brush to create a slip, which then acts as a type of clay glue.

Right Each sprig is slightly different as Hitomi carves extra detail into each one once she has taken it out of the mould; she then carefully bends them to create a sense of movement.

Wreathed in petals, leaves and tiny flowerheads, Hitomi Hosono's astonishing ceramics capture the delicacy of the natural world in layers of intricate, hand-carved porcelain. Her work is a magical fusion of flower and clay so it is unsurprising to find that Hitomi comes from a family of both ceramists and gardeners. She was born in Japan's Gifu province, an area known for its kilns. Her grandfather was a tile maker, and her mother is a keen gardener. "She used to grow so many different kinds of flowers and some of the flowers I now use in my work are from her garden."

Although Hitomi studied ceramics at Kanazawa College of Art, and then at Danmarks Designskole in Denmark, it was not until she undertook an internship at Wedgwood while studying at the Royal College of Art in London that she worked out how best to combine her two passions. This was when she came across 'sprigging', a technique used by Josiah Wedgwood to create an extra layer of relief pattern by applying separate pieces of clay to a vase. Hitomi realised that instead of just applying one or two sprigs, she could cover an entire piece to create a surface encrusted with plant forms like, she says, "the multitude of green leaves that obscure the branches of a tree". It was a career-defining moment, and now, 12 years on, she has built up an international reputation. She won the Jerwood Makers Open in 2014, and her work is on show in museums such as the V&A and the British Museum.

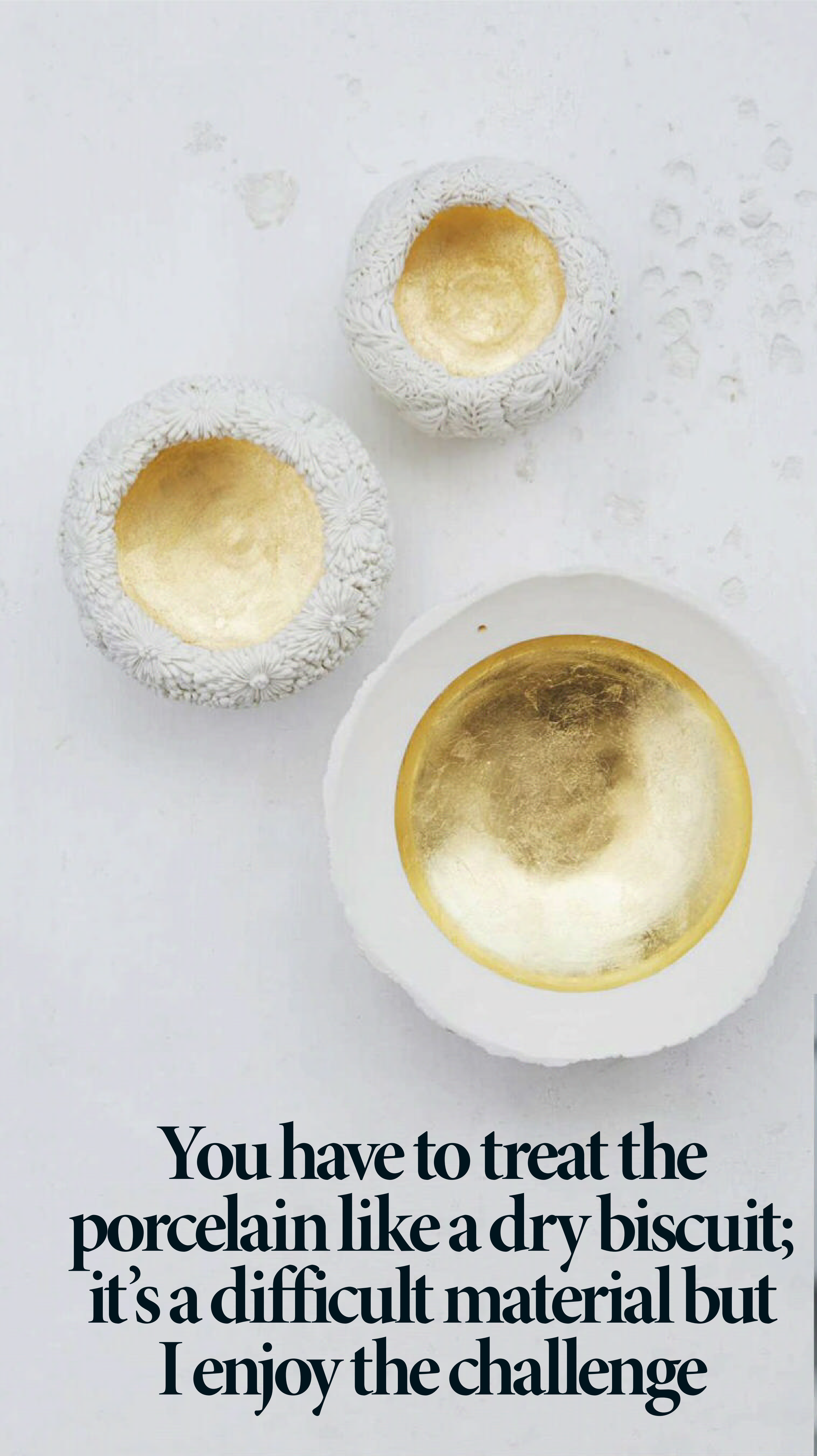
Her vessels start off as simple, hand-thrown pots, which are then covered with individual sprigs. These are made of porcelain, a material that Hitomi calls "wondrous" as she loves the way she is able to etch complex patterns into its smooth surface. The sprigs are formed in moulds made by Hitomi and then given extra carved details before being carefully applied to the vase. She may use several hundred sprigs to make a single piece and her fabulous *Large Feather Leaves Bowl* in the British Museum is covered with a staggering 1,000 individual leaves.

Making the sprigs is the most difficult part of the process as the clay can only be worked when it is exactly the right consistency: "You have to treat the porcelain like a dry biscuit – it's a very difficult material but I enjoy the challenge." Drying the finished vessels is equally tricky and must be done slowly to avoid any cracking when they are fired. It can take months and Hitomi's airy Finsbury Park studio is full of plastic-swathed cardboard boxes, each one home to a slowly drying work of art. When they are ready, the vases are fired just once and then left unglazed and uncoloured so nothing can detract from their densely carved surfaces.

Hitomi is inspired by plants she sees around her, but flowers such as camellias, chrysanthemums and cherry blossom that remind her of Japan are particular favourites. Surprisingly she doesn't photograph or sketch them, but explores their volume and texture by touch. "This information is unconsciously stored in my mind and when I touch the clay it unconsciously comes back through the hand," she says. And it is this instinctive ability to translate natural forms into vessels of great precision and poetry that gives Hitomi's ceramics their extraordinary impact. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Hitomi Hosono is represented by the London gallery, Adrian Sassoon (adriansassoon.com).
She will be showing work at the gallery's stand at the European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) in Maastricht, the Netherlands, from 7-15 March. Visit tefaf.com/fiars/tefaf-masstricht for more information.



Above Hitomi uses fine paint brushes to apply the sprigs and smooth their edges. She uses a variety of dentistry tools to carve the details into the clay.

Left Some of Hitomi's vases are lined with gold leaf. The flash of colour gives a visual surprise when contrasted with the plain, white exterior and creates a sense of hidden treasure.

Below Each vessel starts life as a simple pot, hand thrown on the wheel.

Below left The sprigs are patterned by pressing clay into moulds made of plaster.

You have to treat the porcelain like a dry biscuit; it's a difficult material but I enjoy the challenge

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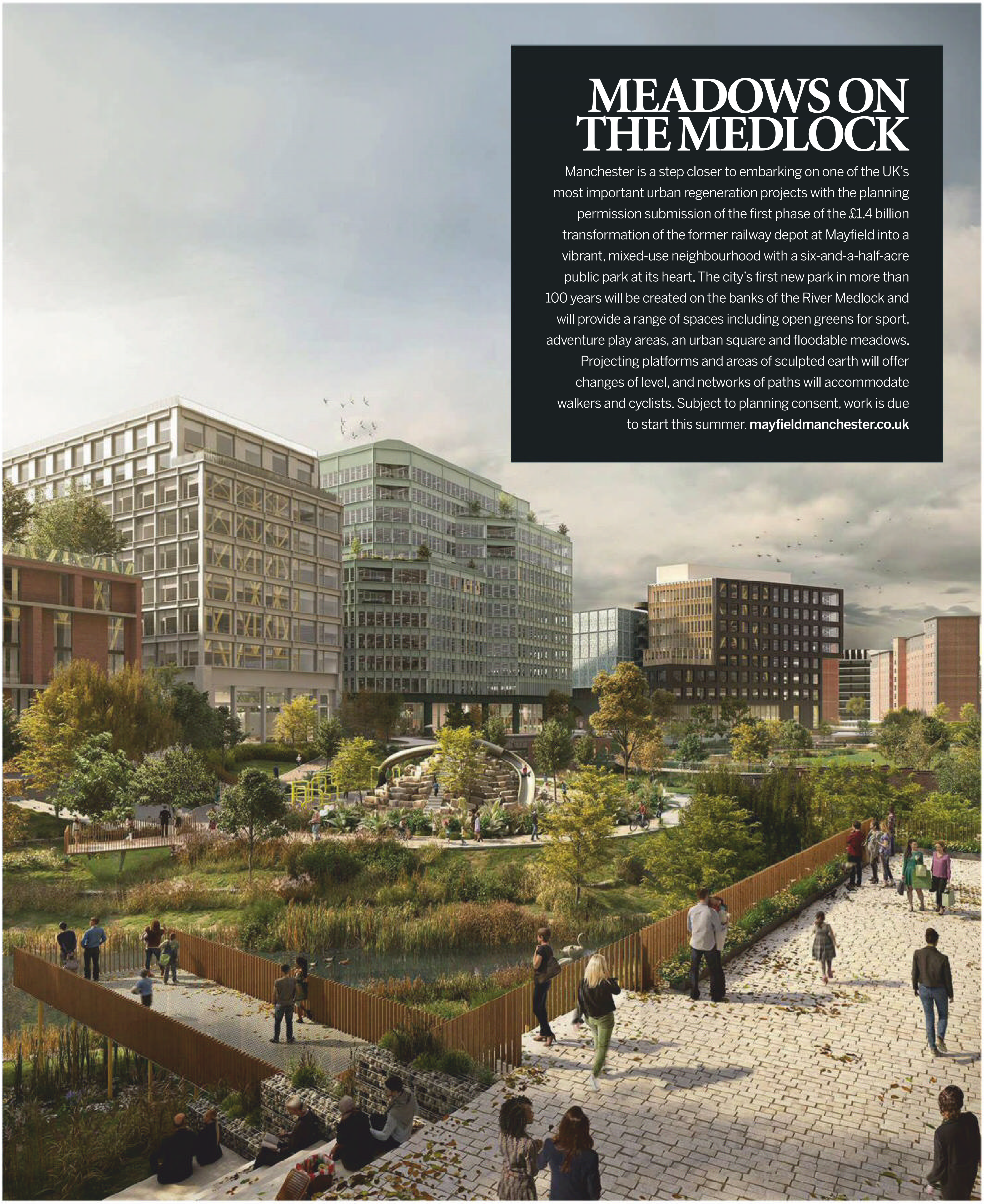
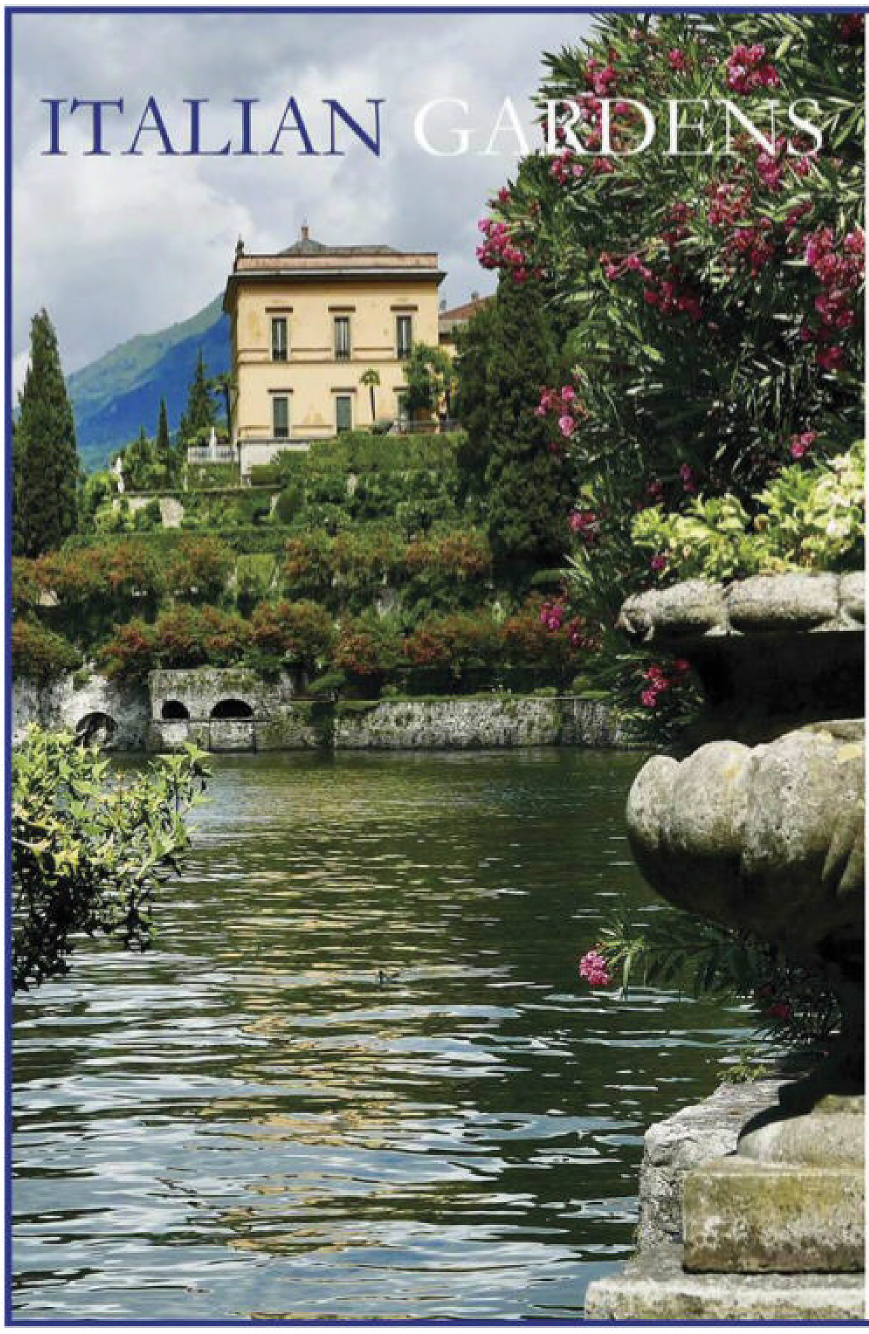
Design

News, ideas and sourcebook

MEADOWS ON THE MEDLOCK

Manchester is a step closer to embarking on one of the UK's most important urban regeneration projects with the planning permission submission of the first phase of the £1.4 billion transformation of the former railway depot at Mayfield into a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood with a six-and-a-half-acre public park at its heart. The city's first new park in more than 100 years will be created on the banks of the River Medlock and will provide a range of spaces including open greens for sport, adventure play areas, an urban square and floodable meadows. Projecting platforms and areas of sculpted earth will offer changes of level, and networks of paths will accommodate walkers and cyclists. Subject to planning consent, work is due to start this summer. **mayfieldmanchester.co.uk**





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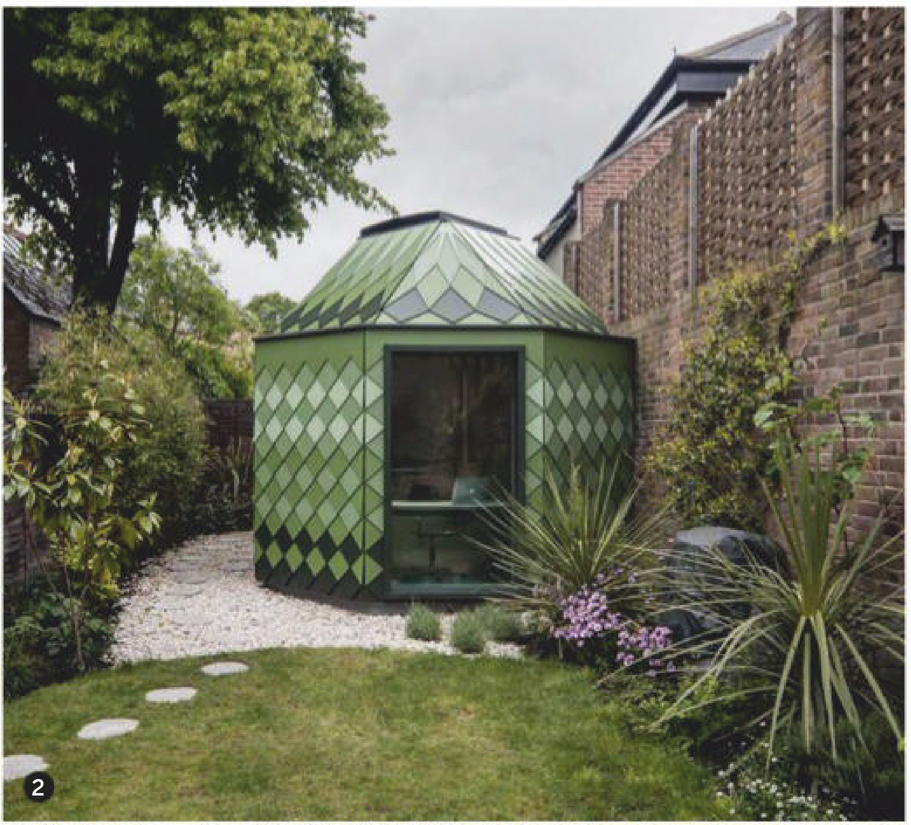
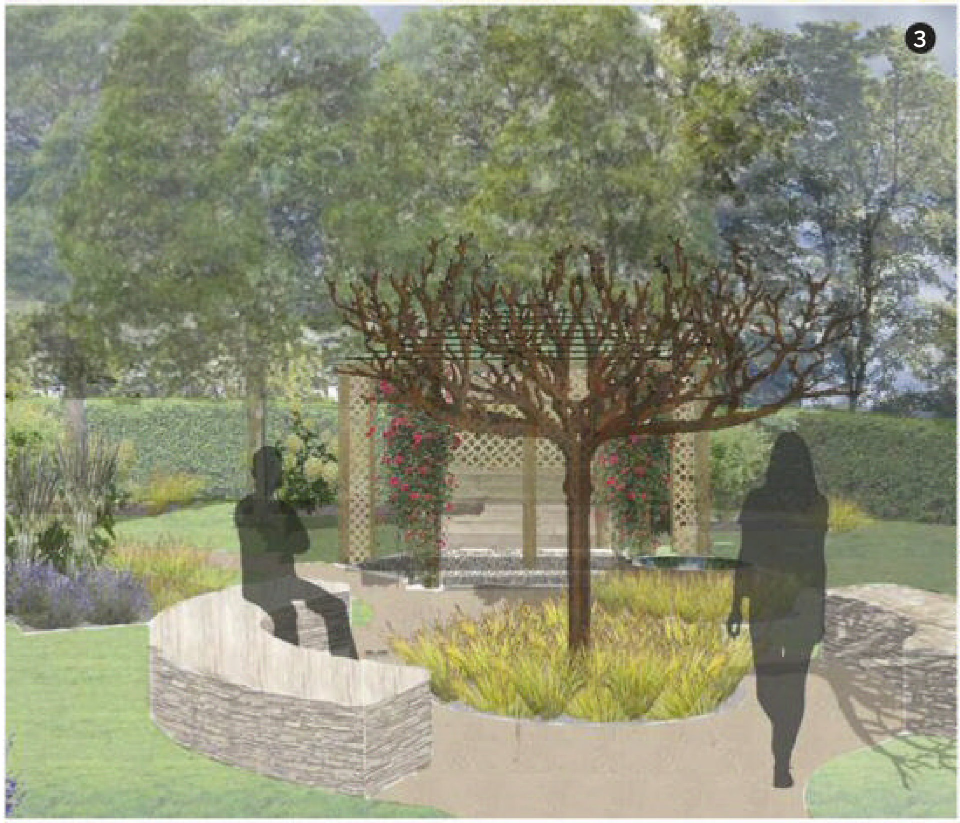




4 WORDSWORTH TRUST

① BESIDE THE SEASIDE

The inaugural Beth Chatto Award at the Society of Garden Designers Awards 2020 has been presented to Sue Townsend for a garden near the Suffolk coast. Judges commended the use of locally sourced materials, such as reclaimed York stone, and the palette of drought- and salt-tolerant plants with contrasting foliage. At the front, lines of *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' screen the entrance, while a hawthorn adds privacy from the road. In the back, grasses, such as *Miscanthus* and *Pennisetum*, add movement, and a stone mulch, which helps to retain moisture, creates a beach-like feel. **suetownsendgardendesign.co.uk**

② FRUITFUL FOLLY

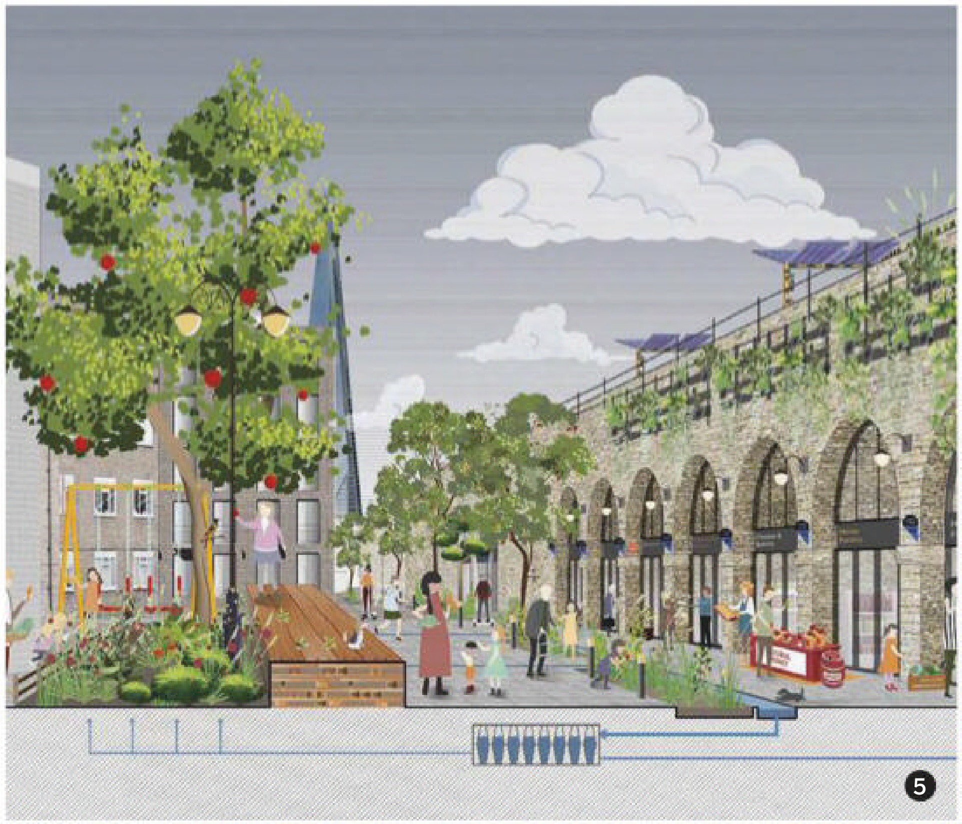
This shingled structure for a garden in southwest London takes its inspiration from the Dunmore Pineapple, an 18th-century pavilion in Scotland. Designed by Studio Ben Allen, the timber-framed building is clad in precision-cut, exterior-grade MDF in shades of green that help it blend with the surrounding plants. The octagonal wall structure rises to form a hexagonal roof that frames a square skylight. It comes flatpacked, and is easy to dismantle so it can be re-erected elsewhere. The design is intended as a prototype that could be offered with a number of different finishes, such as zinc or rubber. **studiobenallen.com**

③ RENEWAL AND REMEMBRANCE

The East Midlands Rainbows Hospice for Children and Young People has received funds from Greenfingers Charity to enhance its memorial garden with a design by VaRa Garden Design. The new scheme provides additional seating for reflection, a water feature in Corten steel and year-round planting that includes multi-stemmed trees, shrubs, grasses and alpines. A sculptural memorial tree in Corten steel, by Caltef Designs, offers bereaved families the opportunity to create and hang personalised glass leaves, in memory of their children. Work is due to begin later this month.

④ POETIC INTERLUDE COMES TO AN END

Dove Cottage, the Lake District home of poets William and Dorothy Wordsworth, reopens this spring after a major restoration of its interior and a re-creation of the original orchard garden. A new sensory garden has been added, and the poets' Moss Hut has been reimagined in a design centred on two interlocking spirals encased in a shell of lightweight oak. In summer the modernised museum, with a new rooftop viewing station, will open. The £6.2-million transformation of the site marks the 250th anniversary of William Wordsworth's birth. **wordsworth.org.uk**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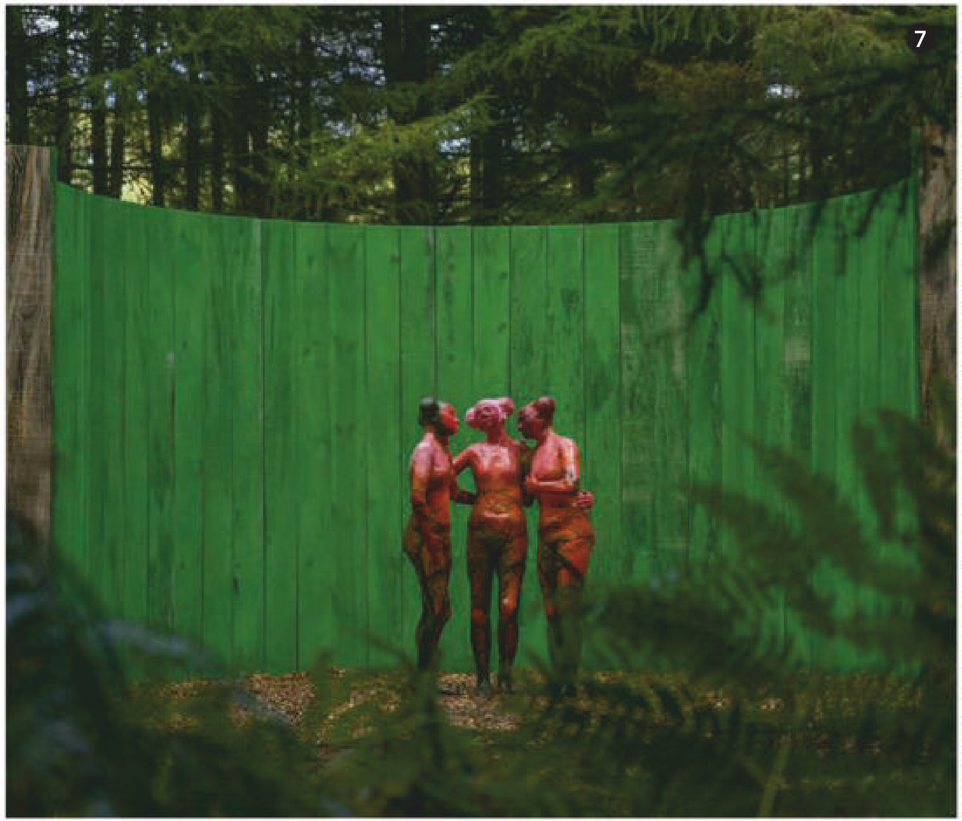
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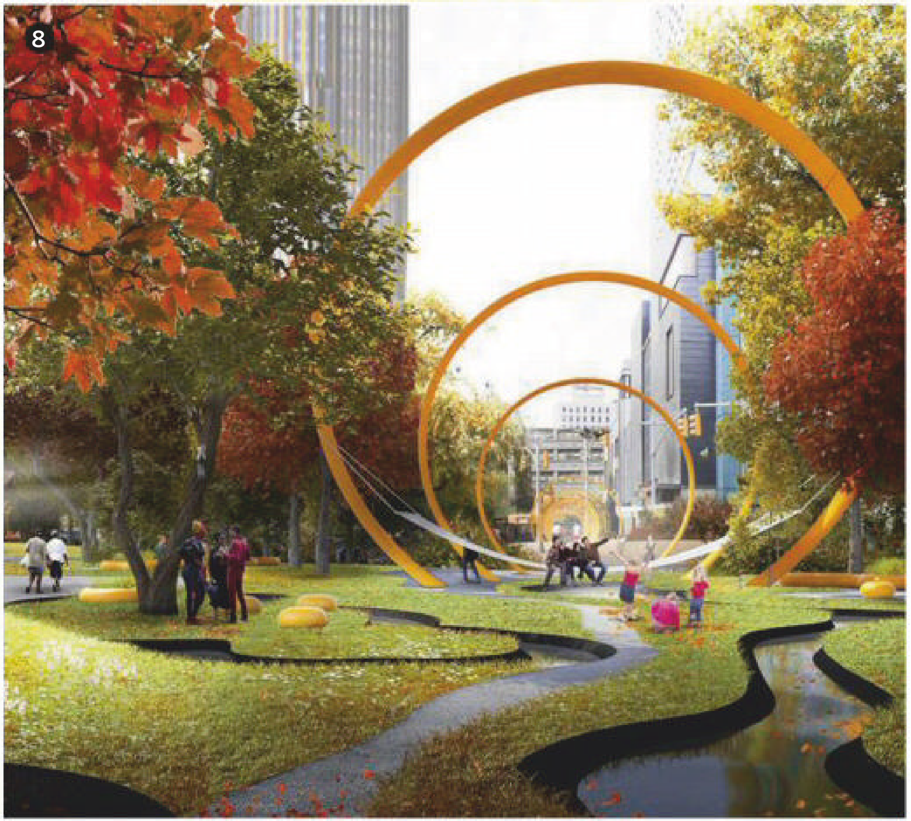
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⑤ HIGH REACH FOR LOW LINE

Architects PDP London, in collaboration with Macfarlane and Associates landscape architects, have won a RIBA international design competition for a new, green vision for the Low Line, a corridor that follows the historic rail viaducts south of the River Thames, revealing hidden walkways and enclosed courtyards. Low Line Commons puts the local community and nature at the heart of the scheme, and features tree planting, community gardens and wildlife habitats. Bioswale planting and street-level rain gardens will prevent surface flooding and store water. **lowline.london**

⑥ BUNNY MELLON PROGRAMME

The Institute of Classical Architecture and Art, which has 15 chapters across the USA, has received a $1-million grant from the Gerard B Lambert Foundation to fund the Bunny Mellon programme in landscape architecture. This new educational programme honours the renowned American garden maker's belief that architecture is firmly linked to, and enhanced by, its surrounding landscape, as seen in her home Oak Spring, Virginia. Highlights will include courses and public lectures, visits to iconic US gardens and landscapes, and an international landscape design competition. **classicist.org**

⑦ FUTURE FOREST, FUTURE PLANET

Future Forest, a sculpture trail developed as part of the centenary celebrations for Thetford Forest in East Anglia and conceived by set designer Tom Piper and artist Lisa Wright, dramatically presents the important role forests play in protecting the environment and safeguarding the future of the planet. Six installations, featuring ten life-sized sculptures that take inspiration from the classical world, represent custodians of the forest. The settings, some in clearings, some deep inside the forest, offer different views of the trees. Continues until 30 May. **forestryengland.uk/100/future-forest**

⑧ DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN REBORN

A new vision for Downtown Brooklyn, the 240-acre business district in New York, has been drawn up by Bjarke Ingels Group with WXY architects and MNLA landscape architects. The scheme provides a greener and safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Some streets will be pedestrianised, cycle lanes increased and vegetation doubled, including the addition of more than 900 trees on streets and in new parks and plazas. Bioswales will help to contain water run-off. Bold colours will be used in the hard landscaping and for street furniture to reflect the lively character of the neighbourhood.

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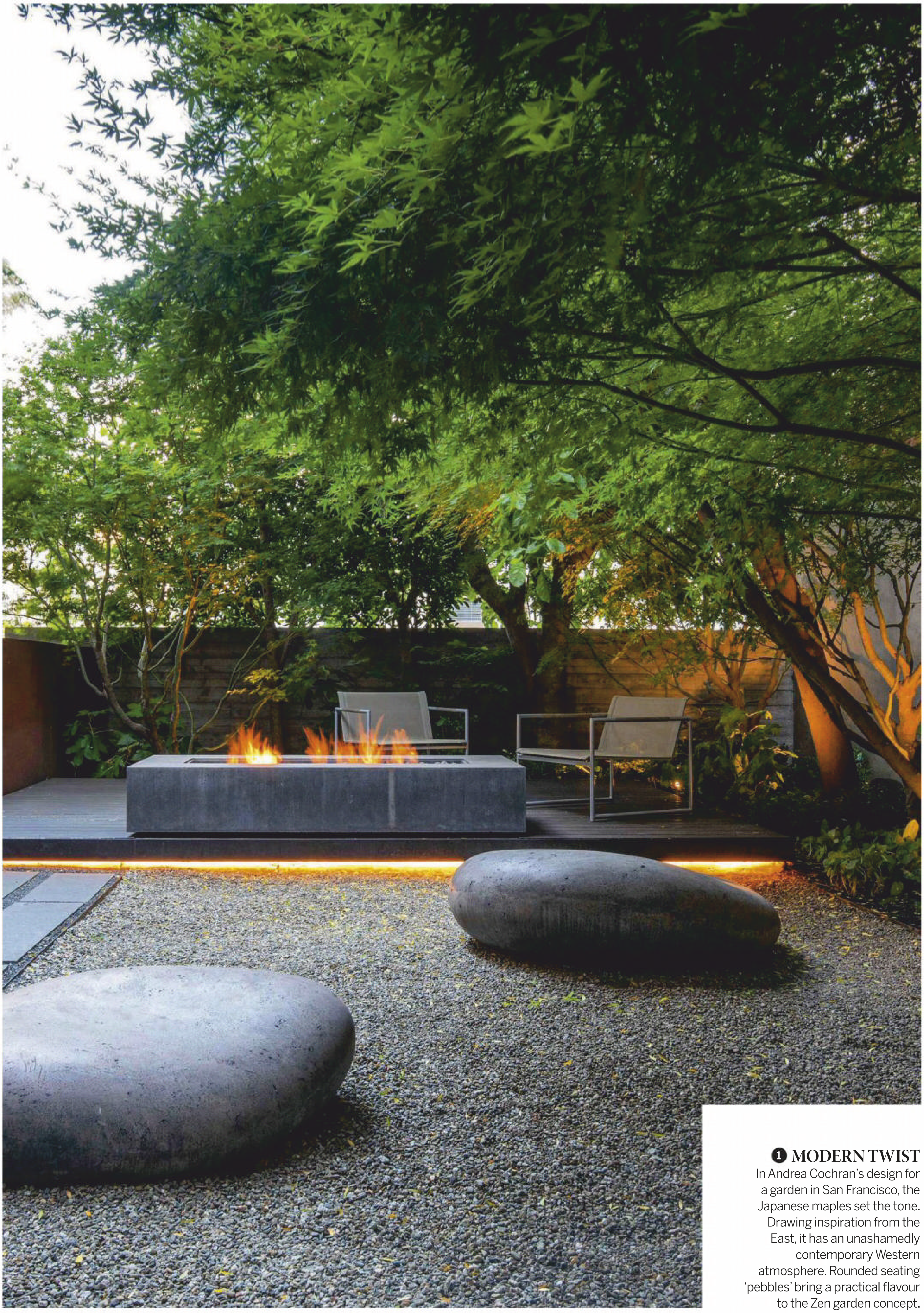


① MODERN TWIST

In Andrea Cochran's design for a garden in San Francisco, the Japanese maples set the tone. Drawing inspiration from the East, it has an unashamedly contemporary Western atmosphere. Rounded seating 'pebbles' bring a practical flavour to the Zen garden concept.

RICHARD BLOOM; DESIGN: ANDREA COCHRAN

Spirit of Japan

Finely tuned and rich in detail, Japanese gardens invite us to engage with nature, and have much to teach us about the aesthetics of design and the appreciation of beauty

WORDS ANDY STURGEON

There are certain things – ouzo and retsina are two good examples – that should never be taken out of their home country. This is true for Japanese gardens. Make one outside of Japan and it is often little more than a Disneyfied pastiche. The reasons are simple: Japanese gardens are a complex art form based on deep meanings and symbolism and are closely bound to that country's spiritual culture and environment.

Yet if you can distil the essence of what they are, there are so many aesthetic principles to be learned and that can be applied to the design of Western gardens. Fundamentally, Japanese gardens are a convergence of architecture, gardens and environment. And that link to the environment, both physically and metaphorically, seems particularly poignant at this moment in time. Japanese gardens have also always been considered to have the power to promote a healthy, spiritual life, something we've only recently grasped in the West.

Stone gardens are perhaps the most famed style. This is a representational world full of symbolism where rocks and seas of gravel may replicate an actual landscape or something as intangible as longevity. Trees and waterfalls are considered to emit a spiritual aura and were once deified; an entire thought process that is quite alien to us. There are lessons here. A single, immovable rock brings a stillness and therefore tranquillity. There may be a few well-placed objects surrounded by lots of space in a perfect balance of mass and void and there is always a comfortable flow connecting those empty spaces. Manipulation of perspective creates the illusion of a larger plot. Large rocks in the foreground lead to much smaller ones behind and vertical accents, such as trees, enforce the effect.

> The gardens are timeless, thanks to the use of natural materials and plants, and because even contemporary designs are inspired by ancient landscapes and nature

Japanese gardens are often referred to as sanctuaries and this is in part a reflection of the importance of enclosure, which is usually the starting point as a space is framed with buildings and fences. The threshold is important too so that the visitor can experience a 'purifying sensation' as they step from one contrasting environment into another. We can achieve this transition with a gate or even by squeezing between two hedges. But the garden inside must then be peaceful, balanced, unhurried and harmonious.

Significantly the gardens are timeless, thanks to the use of natural materials and plants, and because even contemporary designs are so heavily inspired by ancient landscapes and nature itself. There is always a dialogue between the existing site and the new garden and this may come from respecting the existing topography or by echoing materials already present. There is always a beauty in the materials themselves.

Our own gardening culture has been about borrowing from nature, then controlling it and turning it into something else. Japanese gardens are simply a reimagining of nature itself. So while European gardens may be formal, symmetrical and sometimes static, Japanese gardens favour asymmetry as this imbalance brings an energy and dynamism to the garden. Low-level topiary in organic forms is used rather than grand individual statements, totems and rectangles, and these rounded, clipped shapes are often flowing, creating movement and relating to each other. Although they may be obviously clipped and contrived, they make a profound link with the natural scenery beyond. Borrowed views, known in Japanese as *shakkei*, are often used.

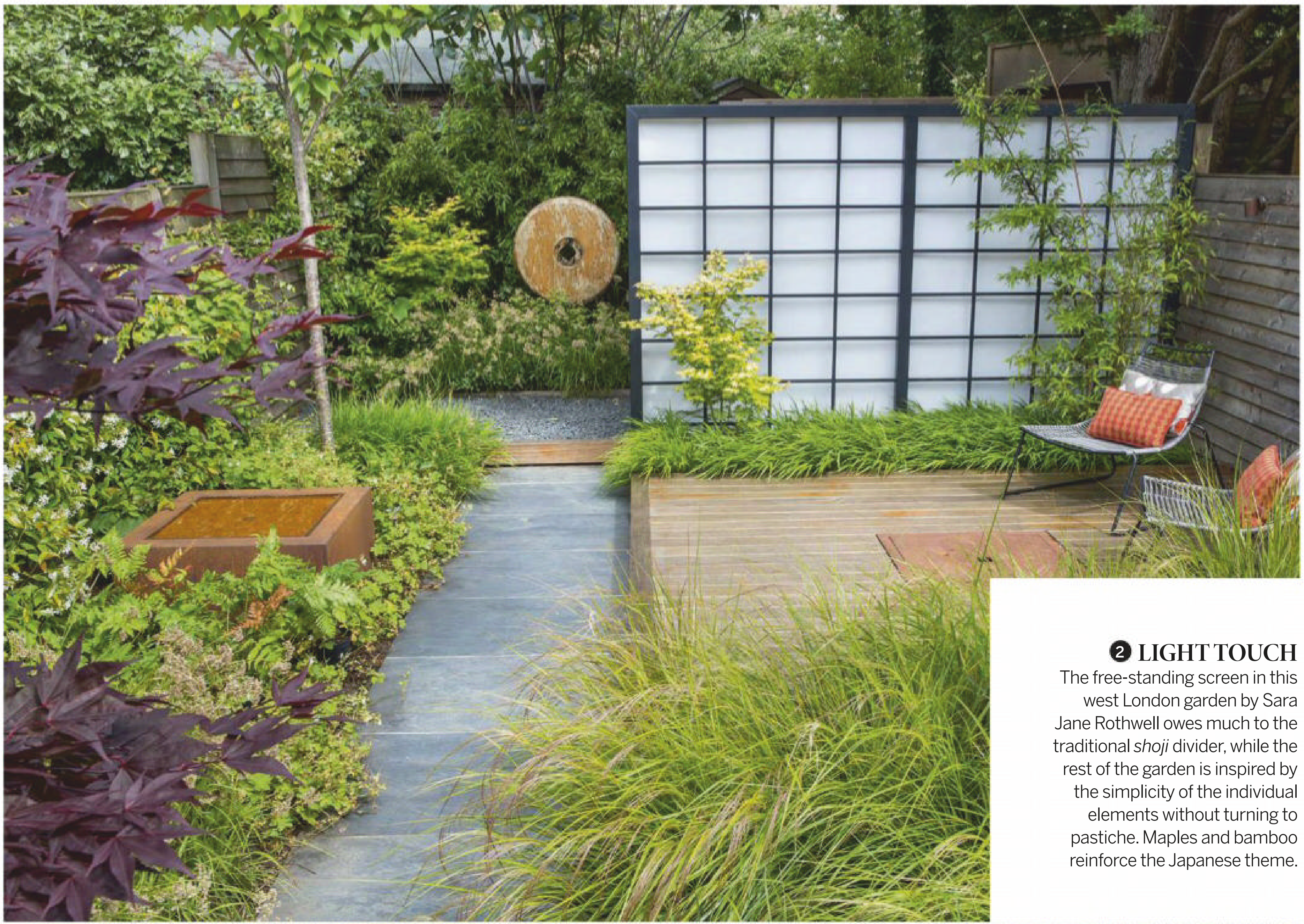
The blurring of inside and out is old hat to the Japanese. Their buildings with sliding *shoji* doors and paper panels were invented to blend architecture and nature. But where we in the West go wrong is that we consider these sorts of devices as a way to get to the outside dining table or lounge seat more easily when instead we should think of this as a way to bring nature and landscape right up to the house to rub against our souls.

Often the Japanese compose a view like a stage set or painting to be experienced from a fixed vantage point. In a courtyard garden, or *naka-niwa*, the small size puts an incredible emphasis on the placement of objects within which could be carefully chosen rocks and moss and perhaps a slender tree that encourages you to look up to the sky and appreciate the sense of openness, which can be vital in a tiny space.

Stroll gardens are different. These are larger gardens and are never seen in their entirety from any single point. Boundaries are hidden and they unfold themselves as winding paths and stepping stones that force visitors to focus on specific vistas. Concealed surprises are at first revealed and then withdrawn as the paths lead on. Walking in the shadows beneath overhanging trees might lead to a bright, sunlit clearing. A narrow threshold unexpectedly delivers you to a wide-open space. These contrasting events are all designed to enrich the journey and bring the garden to life. ◻

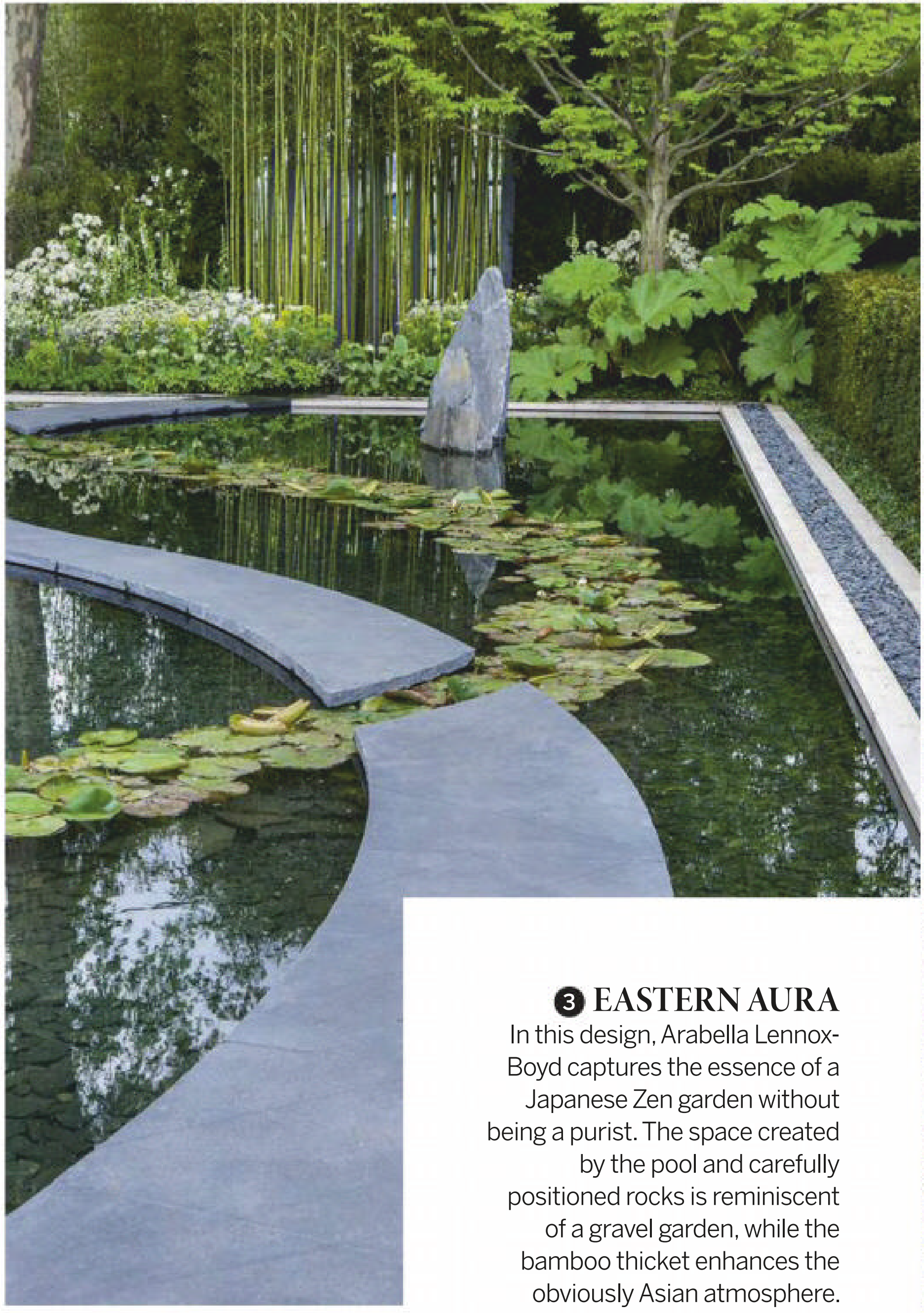
Andy Sturgeon is an internationally renowned landscape and garden designer. He is the winner of eight Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, including Best in Show in 2019. **andysturgeon.com**

Turn the page for more ideas on Japanese gardens ▷



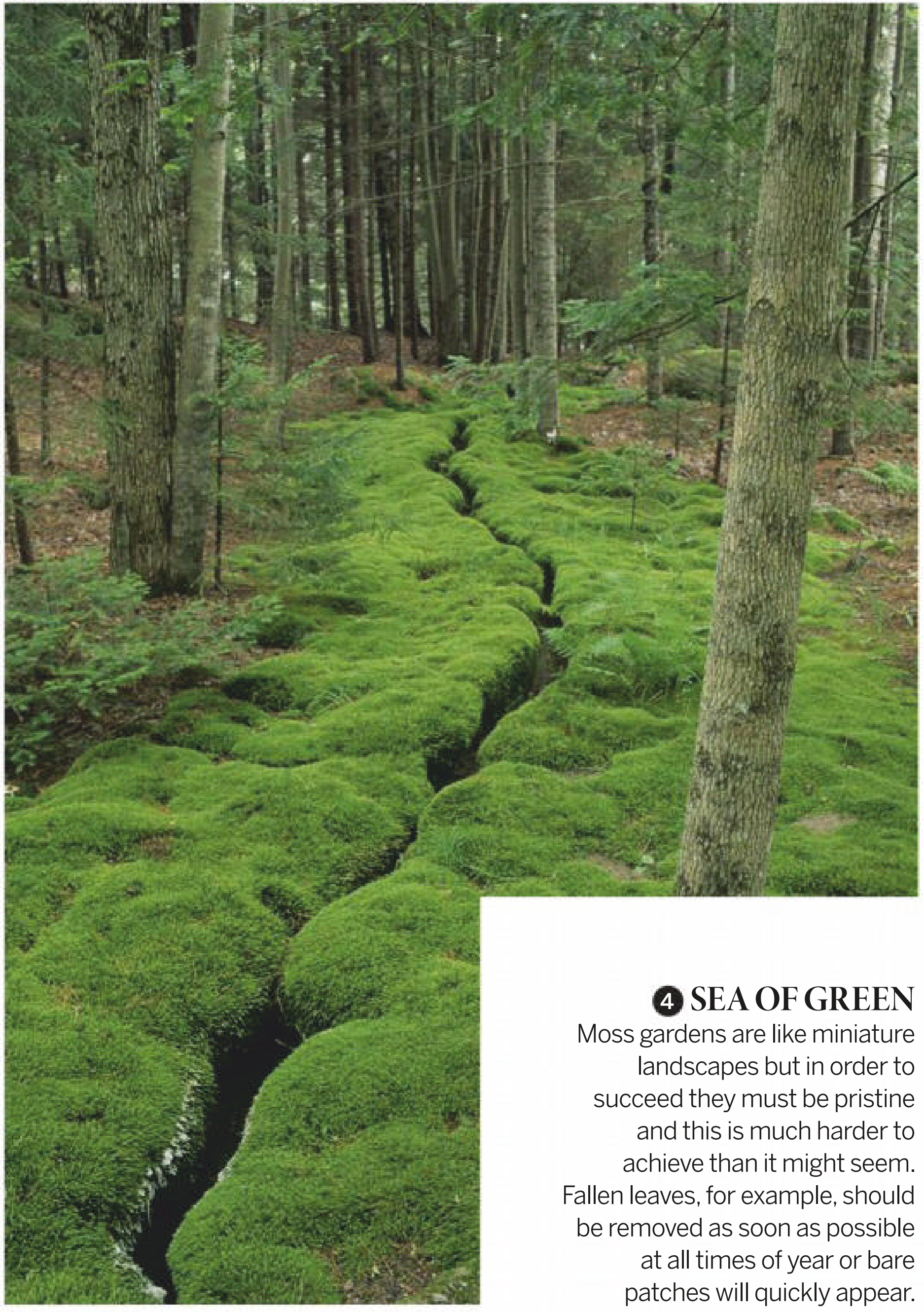
❷ LIGHT TOUCH

The free-standing screen in this west London garden by Sara Jane Rothwell owes much to the traditional *shoji* divider, while the rest of the garden is inspired by the simplicity of the individual elements without turning to pastiche. Maples and bamboo reinforce the Japanese theme.



❸ EASTERN AURA

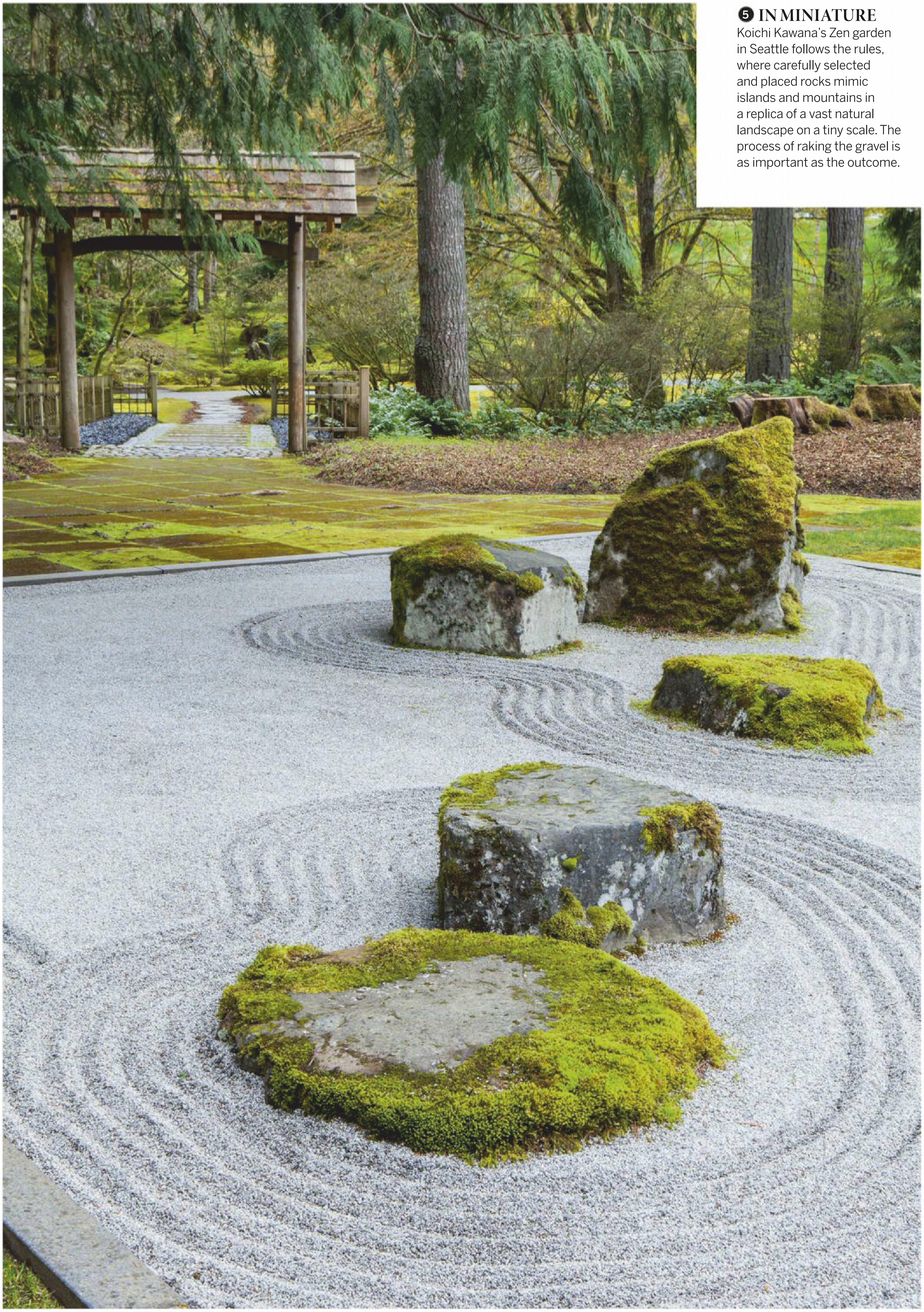
In this design, Arabella Lennox-Boyd captures the essence of a Japanese Zen garden without being a purist. The space created by the pool and carefully positioned rocks is reminiscent of a gravel garden, while the bamboo thicket enhances the obviously Asian atmosphere.



❹ SEA OF GREEN

Moss gardens are like miniature landscapes but in order to succeed they must be pristine and this is much harder to achieve than it might seem. Fallen leaves, for example, should be removed as soon as possible at all times of year or bare patches will quickly appear.

ALL MARIANNE MAJERUS PICTURE LIBRARY: 2 DESIGN: SARA JANE ROTHWELL; 3 DESIGN: ARABELLA LENNOX-BOYD; 4 THE ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER GARDEN, MAINE, USA; 5 THE BLOEDEL RESERVE, SEATTLE, USA, DESIGN: KOICHI KAWANA



❺ IN MINIATURE
Koichi Kawana's Zen garden in Seattle follows the rules, where carefully selected and placed rocks mimic islands and mountains in a replica of a vast natural landscape on a tiny scale. The process of raking the gravel is as important as the outcome.

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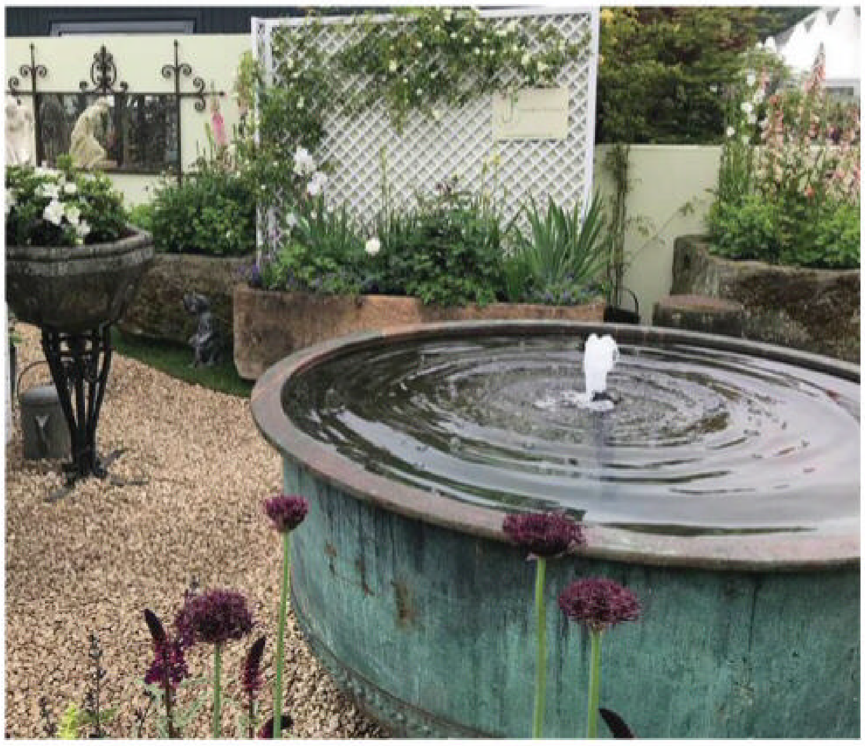

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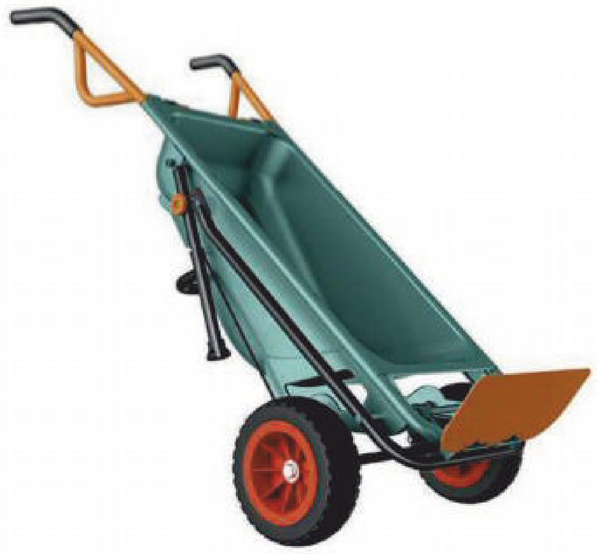

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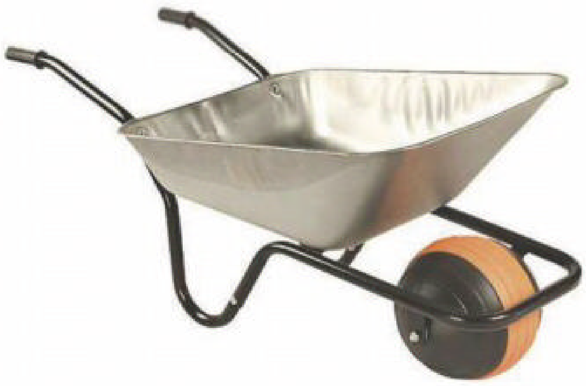

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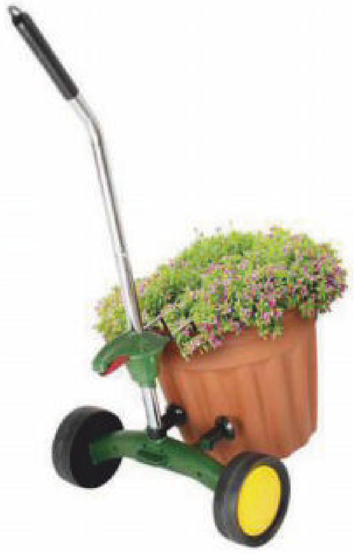
Walsall Duraball Puncture-Proof Wheel Wheelbarrow, £62.99, Screwfix, 0333 011 2112, screwfix.com



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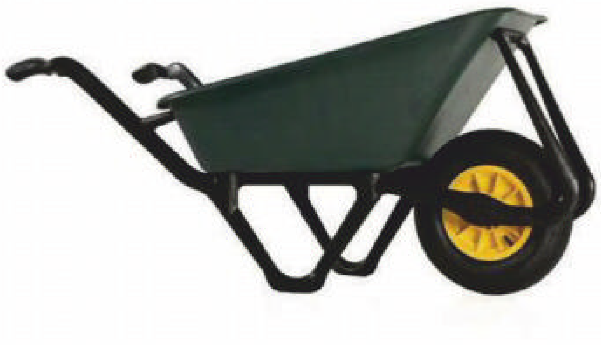

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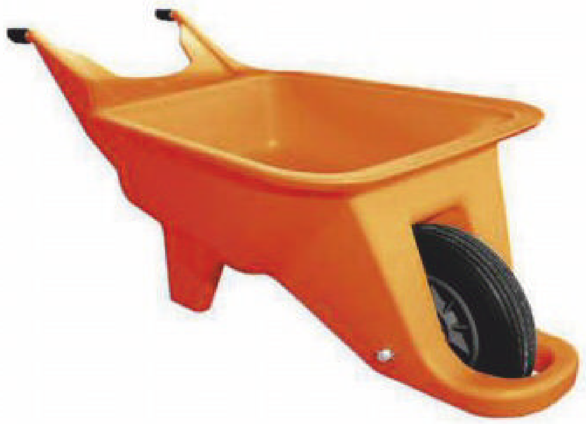
Ecobarrow Recycled Wheelbarrow, £119.95, Garden Oasis, 01543 889900, gardenoasis.co.uk



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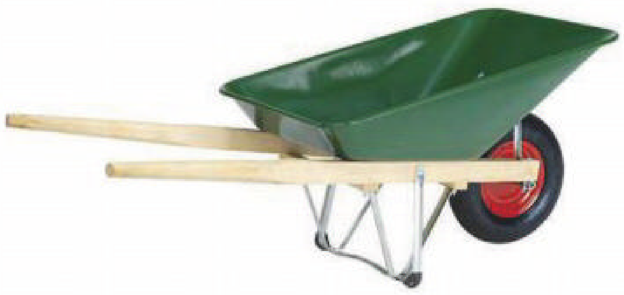
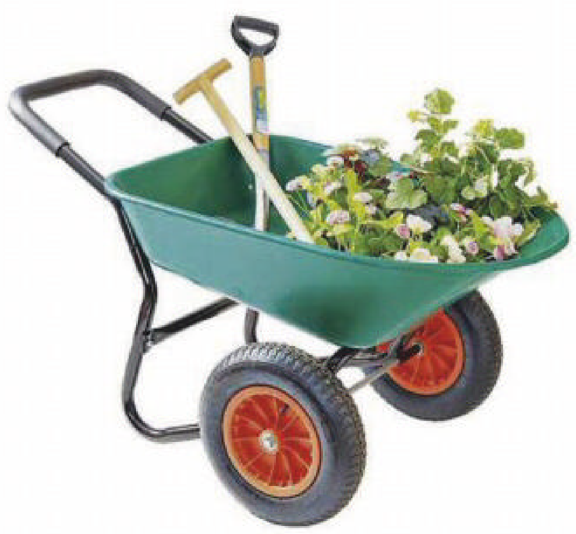
Insulated Wheelbarrow, £110.87, Aspli, 0113 246 1550, aspli.com



WOODEN HANDLES
Classic Wheelbarrow, £165, AJ Products, 01252 359760, ajproducts.co.uk



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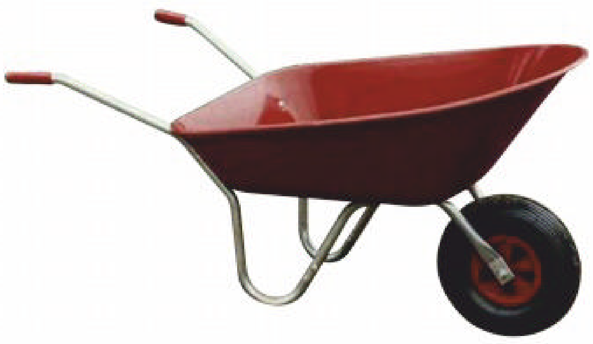
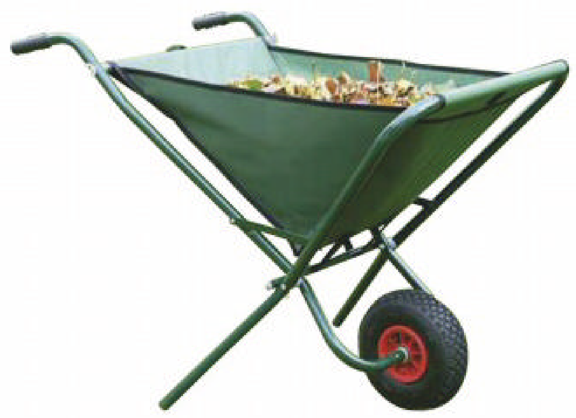
2-Wheel Wheelbarrow, £59.99, Coopers of Stortford, 0330 331 0300, coopersofstortford.co.uk



LIGHTWEIGHT
Ambassador 85 Litre Boxed Wheelbarrow in red, £34.99, Greenfingers, 01506 605157, greenfingers.com



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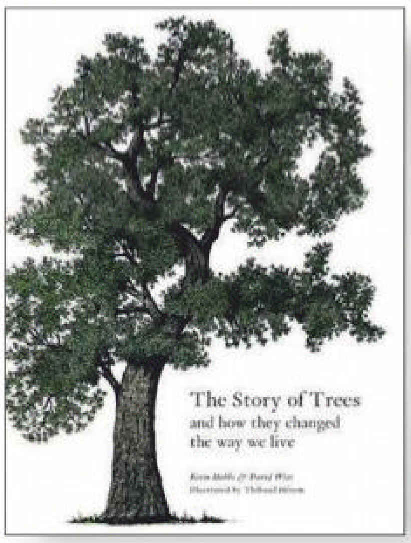
DOWNTOOLS

Book reviews, back issues, crossword

Learn how simple features, such as a reflective bowl, can help introduce the restorative effects of water to your garden in the new RHS book *Your Wellbeing Garden*, reviewed on page 103.

DORLING KINDERSLEY: PETER ANDERSON / RHS CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW 2011

BOOK REVIEWS



THE STORY OF TREES: AND HOW THEY CHANGED THE WAY WE LIVE

by Kevin Hobbs
and David West

Laurence King, £25
ISBN 978-1786275226

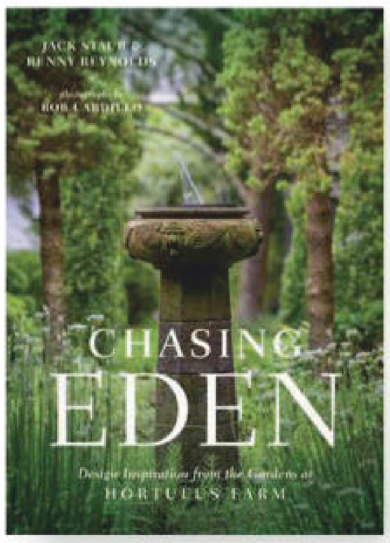
An engaging, digestible take on the tree anthology, drawing together arboreal histories, attractive illustrations and a few surprises along the way.

Reviewer Matt Collins is head gardener at the Garden Museum.

The bookshelf given over to garden reading in my home study is struggling. There is a sag in the middle and the culprits are, without doubt, the tree books. As a species, they are numerous and weighty, encompassing stout, little field guides, such as the trusty *Collins Complete Guide to British Trees,* and great tomes, such as Hugh Johnson's *Trees*. This is to say that there are already many good books about trees; nonetheless, I will be making room on my shelf for the newest among them, *The Story of Trees* by Kevin Hobbs and David West. It is a refreshingly upbeat work, with an attractive, sparse design that lends well to straddling both the reference and engaging reading categories.

Writing enthusiastically about 100 individual tree species is no easy task, but the shared authorship has contributed the necessary zeal. Each tree is given a double page, beautifully illustrated on one – with a full profile, and also a small detail such as fruit or leaf form – and a concise write-up on the other. Thibaud Hérem's accurate yet stylised colour drawings capture not just the shape and form of the subject but also something of its presence. The drawings marry well with the authors' descriptions, which combine a basic botanical overview (origin, height, habitat and so on) with historical and human associations. The result is that these trees (a physically and geographically diverse selection including Indian figs, Chinese plums and English oaks) are placed in a digestible, relatable context, not weighing the reader down with unnecessary bumf, but offering refreshing and often unusual details.

Because of its size and format, one must decide how to consume this book: as frequent reference or perhaps one tree a night before bed. I first went through the trees that hold significance for me, and learned new things: about the 'ghetto palm', ancient chestnuts and the American walnut's dark shadow. A real treasure trove.



CHASING EDEN: DESIGN INSPIRATION FROM THE GARDENS AT HORTULUS FARM

by Jack Staub and Renny Reynolds, photographs by Rob Cardillo

Timber Press, £26.99
ISBN 978-1604698732

The story of how two men made a garden and faced the realities of applying classical design principles to a former farmland landscape.

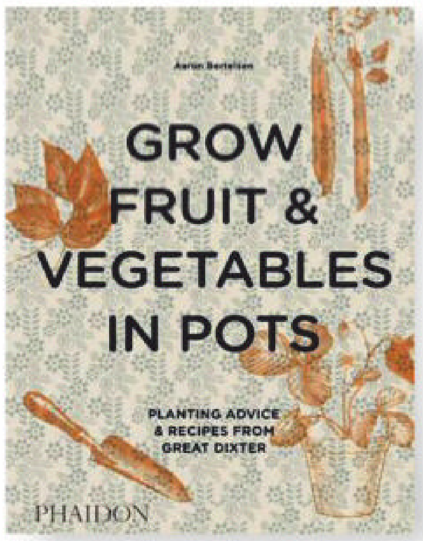
Reviewer Noel Kingsbury is a garden designer and writer.

A popular form of garden book for much of the 20th century was 'the garden novel', the story of how someone made a garden. With the rise of lifestyle publishing in the 1980s, this genre rather disappeared. A shame in a way, as the narrative of how someone made decisions, cleared scrub, planted, failed, tried again, succeeded, experimented, occasionally despaired, and usually more frequently rejoiced, is one that many of us can relate to and, of course, learn from.

So it is good to see a revival of the genre. The authors have been making a garden together in the Pennsylvania countryside since 1979. As an exposition of the thought processes and practical issues of applying classical garden and landscape theory to the often inconvenient realities of a patch of land, it is an excellent and insightful observational narrative. That the project involves a very well-resourced site of more than 15 acres may put some readers off, but the principles would be the same for any but the smallest garden, something that the authors emphasise.

Strong points are the 'dos and don'ts' columns and the short discourses on garden history at the end of every chapter. However, the garden shows its age; I have always been surprised at how until recently American gardens uncritically aped European styles, and this is very much the case here – 'classical' is a word that appears again and again. The new thinking embodied by the Oehme, van Sweden practice, the veritable explosion of interest in natives and planting for biodiversity, have largely seemed to have passed the project by.

Editing seems to have failed to ensure the use of scientific names, or to weed out some errors when there is a rare mention of more contemporary garden styles, but it's a wonderfully written and very informative narrative nevertheless.



GROW FRUIT & VEGETABLES IN POTS: PLANTING ADVICE & RECIPES FROM GREAT DIXTER

by Aaron Bertelsen

Phaidon Press, £24.95
ISBN 978-0714878614

A charming, thorough and truly inspirational book, showing how everybody can grow some of their own food in almost any situation.

Reviewer Tom Coward is head gardener at Gravetye Manor.

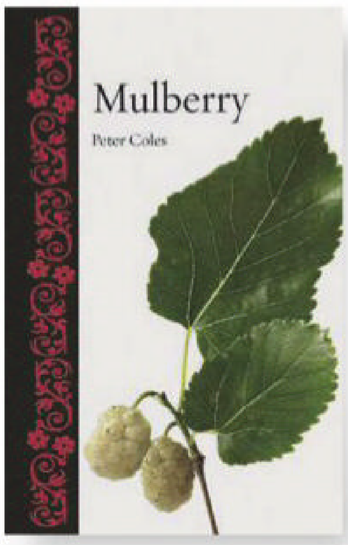
Aaron Bertelsen has spent his life cultivating and loving plants and as a passionate cook has always had a special interest in growing fruit and vegetables. Over the past ten years he has developed the kitchen garden at Great Dixter to the highest standard, and the dishes he produces from it have become legendary.

But in a little courtyard, outside his kitchen door, Aaron has developed the most beautiful, vibrant and delicious garden, full of produce grown entirely in pots. This space has become his secret pride and joy and has been designed to create the maximum amount of pleasure from the smallest of spaces. Many people aren't lucky enough to have a space in which to garden, but by using Aaron's methods it is possible for anyone to enjoy the pleasures of growing food almost anywhere.

In the first part of this beautifully illustrated book, Aaron discusses how the container kitchen garden can work and describes planning, growing and caring for the crops, including information on which types of container and compost to use, growing from seed or plugs, watering and mulching, feeding and weeding, staking and pruning.

Next, he presents the crops available, divided into sections on salads, root vegetables, other vegetables, fruit, herbs and edible flowers, and gives experienced advice on growing them, including key dates and common problems, alongside his own favourite varieties. Last, he shares a selection of his recipes, which is a collection of the best home cooking from friends and gardeners around the world.

If you have limited space and time but have always wanted to grow fresh produce, this book will inspire and guide you in enjoying one of the most basic pleasures in life. It also encourages the experienced grower to think outside of the box and consider what can be achieved with plants in any situation.



MULBERRY

by Peter Coles

Reaktion Books, £16
ISBN 978-1789141429

A short but incredibly fact-packed book that traces the history of this most historically and economically important of trees.

Reviewer Ambra Edwards is a writer and garden historian.

The mulberry tree and the silkworms that feed on its leaves are, explains Peter Coles, indivisible – it is silk that has driven the mulberry's spread across the globe. Much of the book is thus given over to a history of sericulture, the production of silk. Following it is like trying to unravel a thread tangled at the bottom of the sewing box; a thread, moreover, randomly cut by wars or religious persecution. Eventually we arrive in 17th-century Britain, and James I's doomed attempt to set up a British silk industry, which failed, the story goes, because James mistakenly introduced the black mulberry, *Morus nigra*, instead of the white, *Morus alba*. (The distinction is based on the colour of the buds, not the fruit.) Coles argues this is untrue: silk has been produced from black mulberries for millennia, notably in India, albeit a coarser, heavier silk than that of the white. The difficulty with sericulture is that the tiny silkworm larvae can only feed on the most tender young leaves, so the trick is to bring the two lifecycles into sync. And this would have been tricky in Jacobean Britain, just entering the Little Ice Age.

Coles pursues the mulberry through legend, art and literature, from ancient Chinese myths to Instagram, before a fascinating final chapter explores the many uses of the 'Tree of Plenty'. The oldest known woodblock print was made on mulberry paper, while Marco Polo marvelled at its use in China for paper money. Both the Roman Empire and native Americans enjoyed the fruit, while all parts of the tree have medicinal value, from traditional Chinese remedies to modern treatments for type 2 diabetes.

The latest in the excellent Reaktion series on the cultural history of plants, *Mulberry* is perhaps slightly less engaging than some earlier studies, but offers a comprehensively researched and wide-ranging introduction to the subject.

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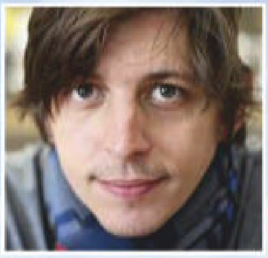

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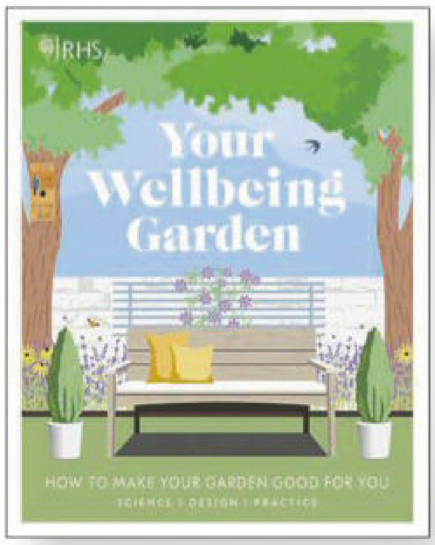
BOOK REVIEWS



RHS YOUR WELLBEING GARDEN : HOW TO MAKE YOUR GARDEN GOOD FOR YOU
by Alistair Griffiths and
Matt Keightley

DK, £16.99
ISBN 978-0241386729

An informative and timely guide to creating an external retreat for internal stresses, driving home the fact that we all need a little more 'vitamin G'.

Reviewer Katie Dutton is editorial assistant at Gardens Illustrated.

There are few activities as beneficial to our mental and physical wellbeing as gardening. The responsibility of caring for something, getting outdoors and keeping active has been proven to boost self-esteem, stave off isolation and even increase one's lifespan.

Professor Alistair Griffiths, director of science at the RHS Centre for Horticultural Science and Learning, highlights these benefits through a discussion of four types of wellbeing garden: The Protective Garden, The Healing Garden, The Nourishing Garden and The Sustainable Garden. Each chapter is dedicated to the benefits of that particular type of garden, how one can achieve it, and the scientific studies that prove the importance of doing so.

One study, for example, found that people living without easy access to a green space were 33 per cent more likely to suffer from depression and 44 per cent more likely to have anxiety compared with those living within walking distance of a green, natural environment.

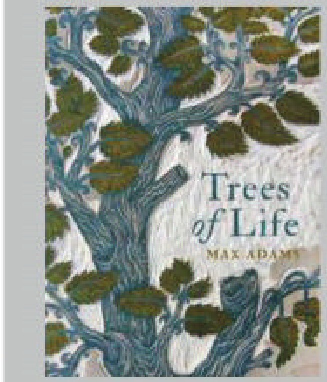
Humans are biophiles; we have an instinctive attachment to the earth, and the absence of such a connection can have detrimental effects on both ourselves and the planet, as we are now witnessing to an alarming extent. There is no better time, then, to reap the calming benefits of natural spaces, whether by lining your urban balcony with pollution-protecting plants, adding a soothing water feature to your garden, or just finding a greener route to work.

Practical design advice from award-winning garden designer Matt Keightley is included at the end of each chapter, showing the reader how to put Griffiths' ideas into practice. Bright, colourful photographs, illustrations and diagrams break up the factual text and make this an accessible book that both new and established gardeners will want to turn to time and again.

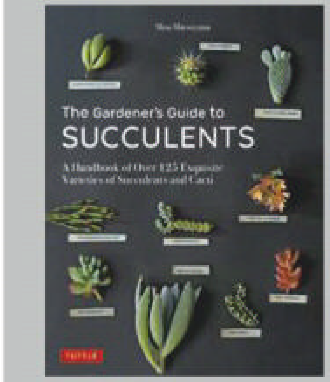
Other books

This month's pick includes a look at the intimate lives of birds, tips on growing succulents and how to create your dream shed

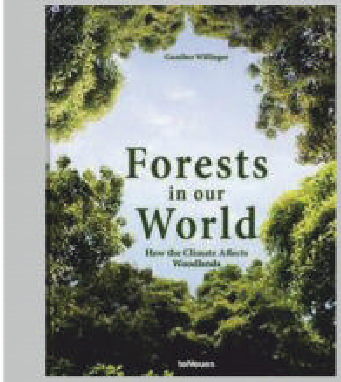
SHED STYLE
by Selina Lake
Ryland Peters & Small, £19.99
ISBN 978-1788791823
Fans of George Clark's *Amazing Spaces* will love this inspiring book on how to create your own outdoor retreat, from workspaces and snugs to greenhouses and potting sheds.



TREES OF LIFE
by Max Adams
Apollo, £25
ISBN 978-1789541427
A fascinating study of 80 tree species, their practical uses as sources of medicines, timber, fruit and nuts, and how they have influenced human culture.



THE GARDENER'S GUIDE TO SUCCULENTS
by Misa Matsuyama
Tuttle Publishing, £13.99
ISBN 978-0804851060
A clear, cohesive guide to growing succulents, with maintenance tips, plant characteristics and useful identification photos.



FORESTS IN OUR WORLD
by Gunther Willinger
teNeues, £45
ISBN 978-3961712182
A journey through the Earth's five forest formations, from the far north to the tropics, emphasising the link between deforestation and the current climate crisis.

BIRD LOVE
by Wenfei Tong
Ivy Press, £25
ISBN 978-1782407485
A sumptuously illustrated book showcasing the astonishing variety of courtship techniques, mating behaviour and parenting lives of birds around the world.

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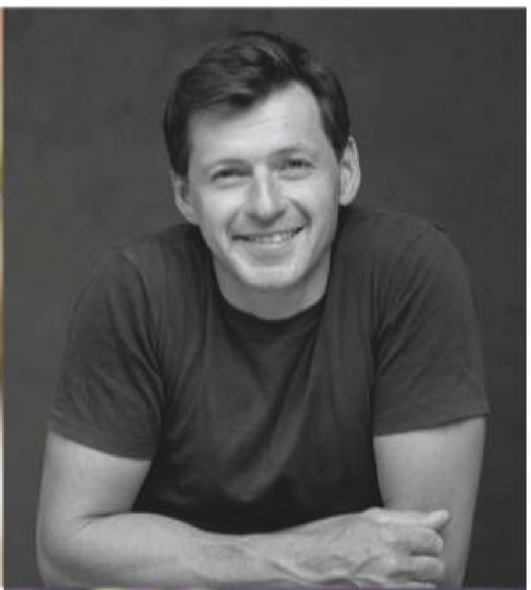

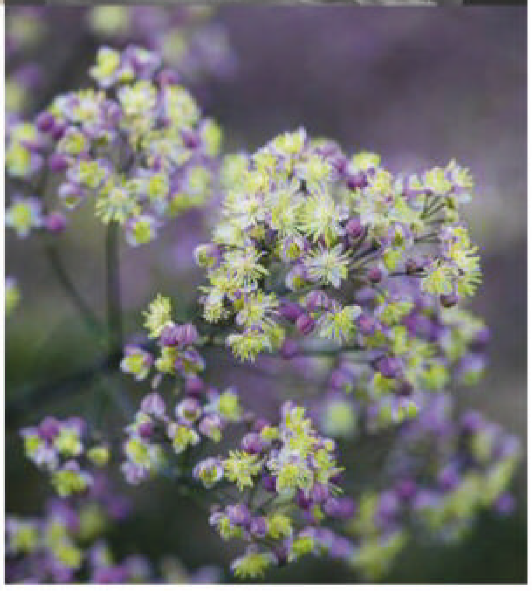

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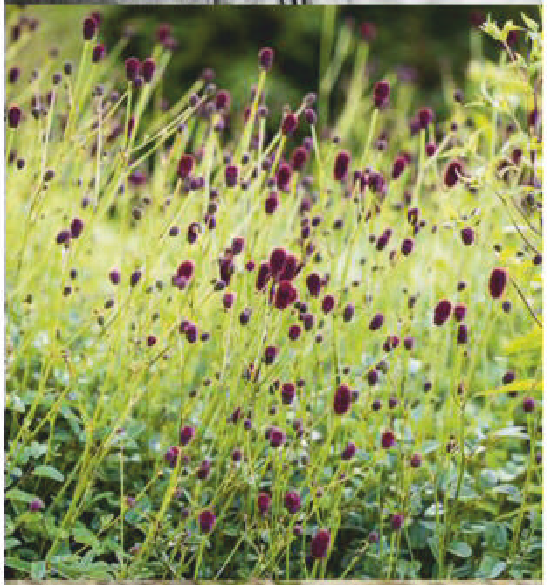

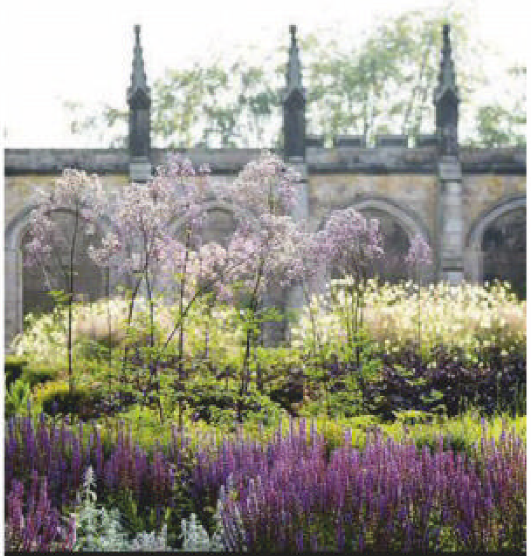

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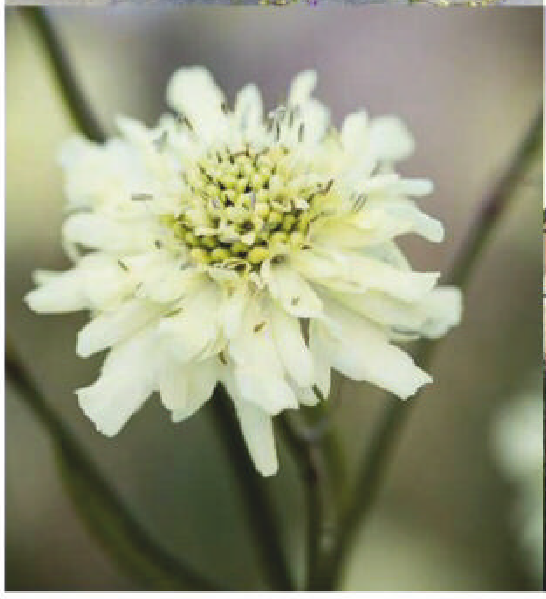

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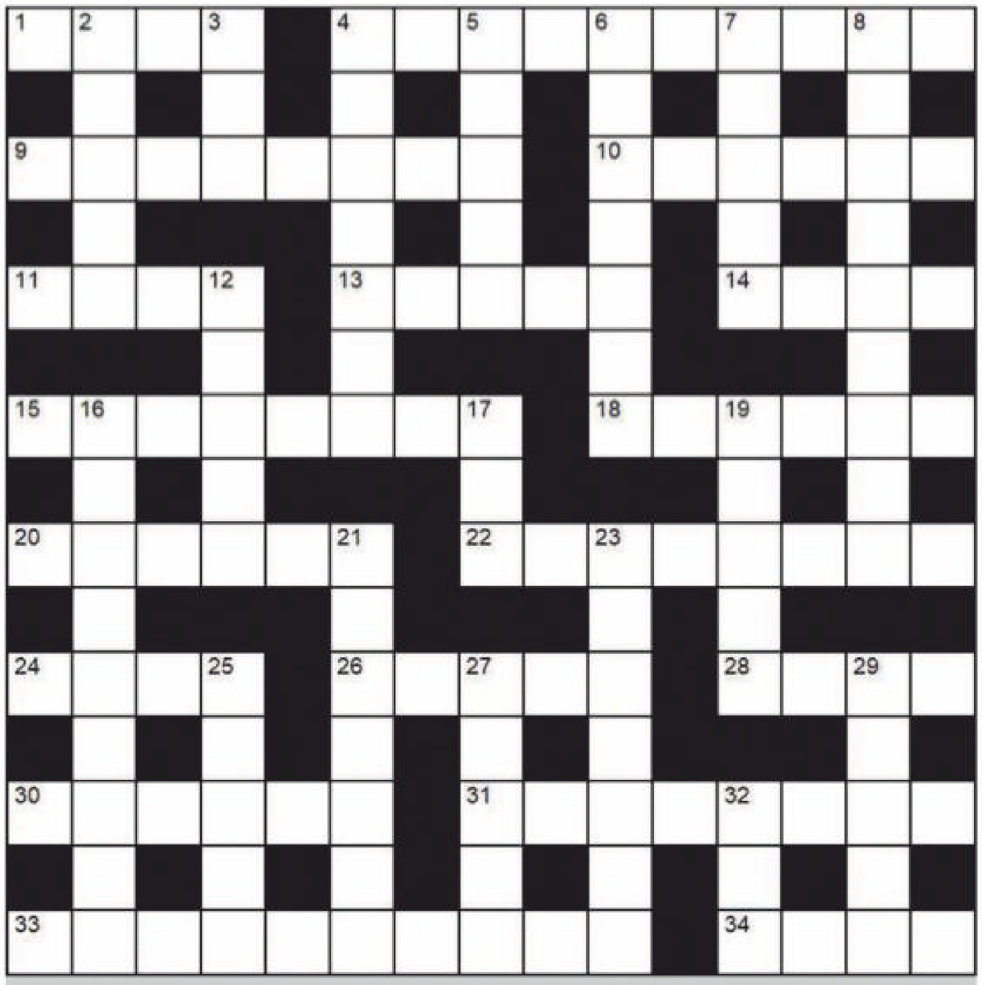

ACROSS

1/30 Common name for *Zantedeschia* – is laurel? I'm confused! (4,6)
4 Purple loosestrife with burgundy flower spikes, and a light, French red wine (10)
9 A claret-coloured *Aquilegia vulgaris*… and fortified wine (4,4)
10 Double-flowering, lilac-blue clematis – Castor and Pollux (6)
11 Evergreen, flowering shrub – carried by the *Beagle*! (4)
13 Has an unusual… *Rosa rugosa* with double magenta flowers (5)
14 An orange, double-flowering tulip… in Windsor Castle (4)
15 The sweet pea genus has truly altered! (8)
18 The catchfly genus (6)
20/2 Magenta-pink dianthus with darker edges – big attraction in Paris (6,5)
22 Genus of plants, aka milfoil, yarrow, old man's pepper (8)
24 *Melissa officinalis*, for example, is a comfort (4)
26 Irritating little fly – dig me out! (5)
28 Flat-topped inflorescence – part of lacy meadowsweet (4)
30 See 1 across
31 *Rosa moschata* – white-flowering, strongly scented, thorny shrub (4,4)
33 Rectangular bed with intricate pattern outlined by box hedge (4,6)
34 Wild plant often found near nettles (4)

DOWN

2 See 20 across
3 The hawthorn flower… might? (3)
4 Carbonised material, possible soil improver – processed coir? Bah! (7)
5 William ___, Kew's first director – ain't about to crush centre of bloom (5)
6 The walnut tree genus, Jan confused with slug! (7)
7 *Narcissus* with large, red cup – uncertain state (5)
8 A white *Philadelphus* with variegated foliage – 'Naivety'? (9)
12 Rambling rose with pale-pink double flowers, he let loose (5)
16 Worship… a named *Veronicastrum* with tiny, lilac-pink flowers (9)
17 See 32 down
19 Usual colour of *Syringa vulgaris* (5)
21 South African colourful bedding plant – ie names changed (7)
23 Gently firms soil round newly planted shrub (5,2)
25 State of soil ideal for seedlings – 'Love in mist'! (5)
27 Like Eden Project's massive greenhouses (5)
29 *Aquilegia* ___ Series, long-spurred, often bicoloured – provided in a concert hall? (5)
32/17 A penstemon with white-throated, red flowers – divides Africa from Asia! (3,3)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

SOLUTIONS TO FEBRUARY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Opal **4** Bellflower **9** Carrot **10** Bracken **11** Ulex **12** Mulch **13** Rain **14** Turves **16** Air-pots **18** Hot Lips **21** Orange **22** Ibis **24** Egret **26** Romneya **28** In a row **29** Photograph **30** Sift.

DOWN 2 Pearl bush **3** Larix **4** Butomus **5** Lobelia **6** Feather **7** Oak **8** Ennui **13** Rioja **15** Vitis **17** Sugarloaf **19** Iceberg **20** Striata **21/25A** Ostrich fern **23** Birch **25** Flags **27** Mat.

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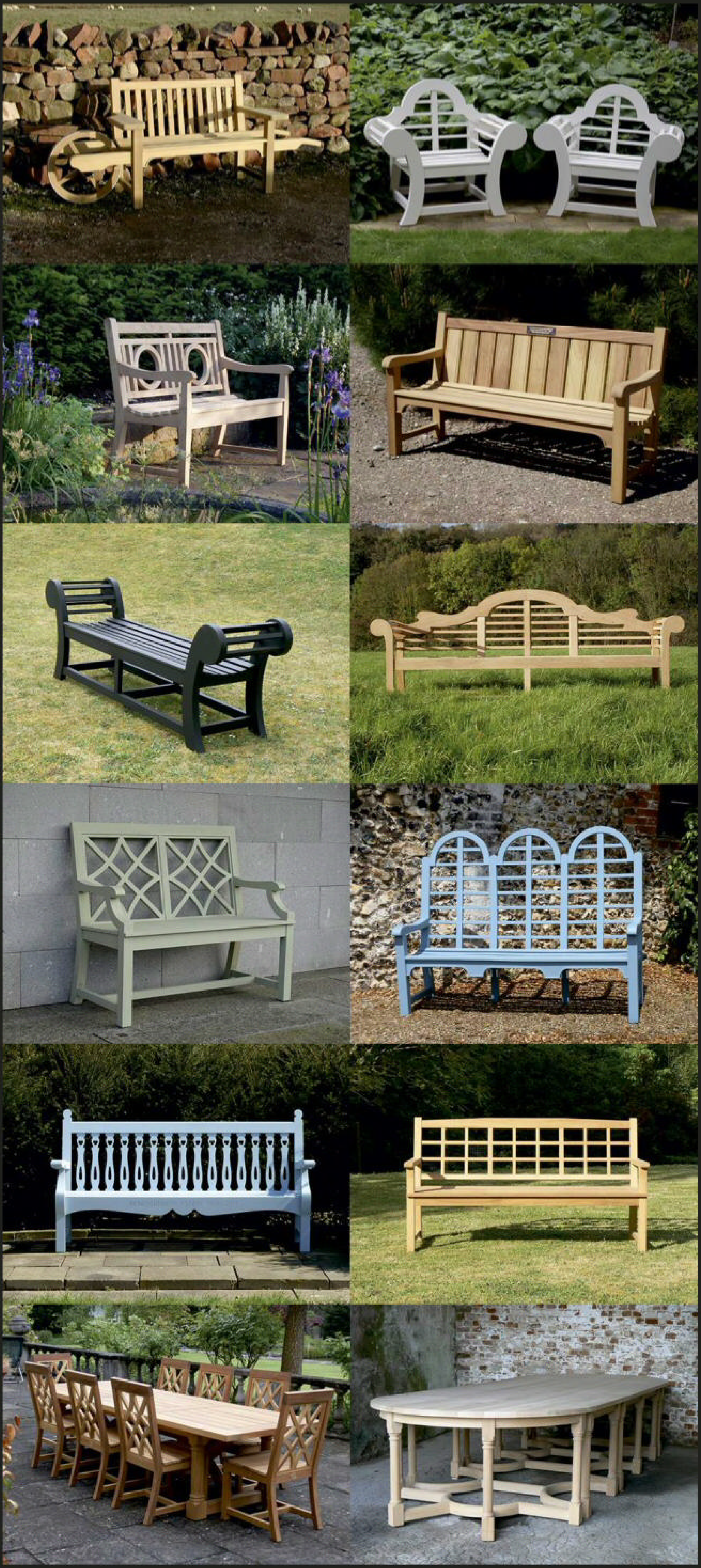

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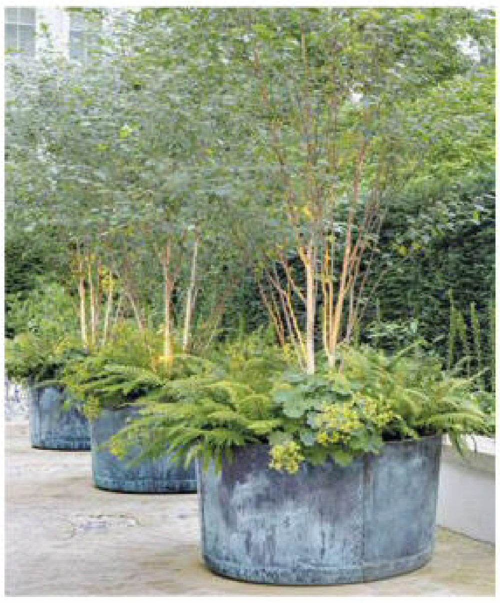

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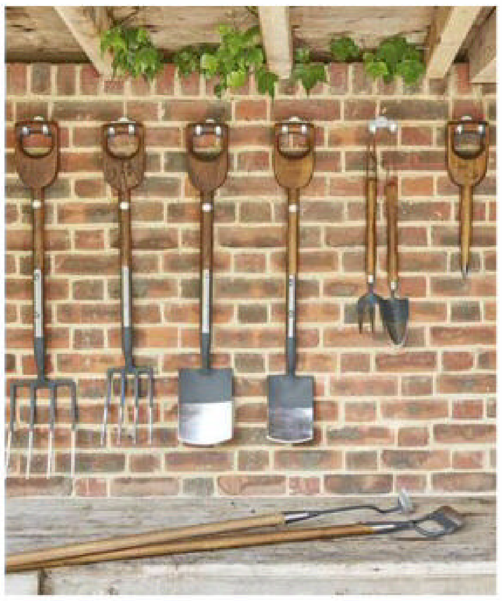

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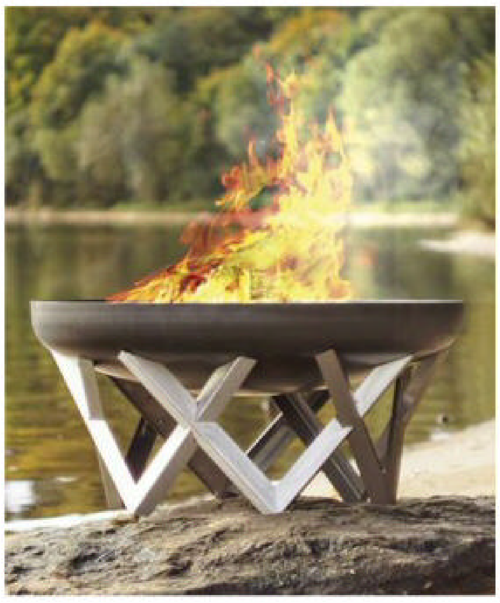

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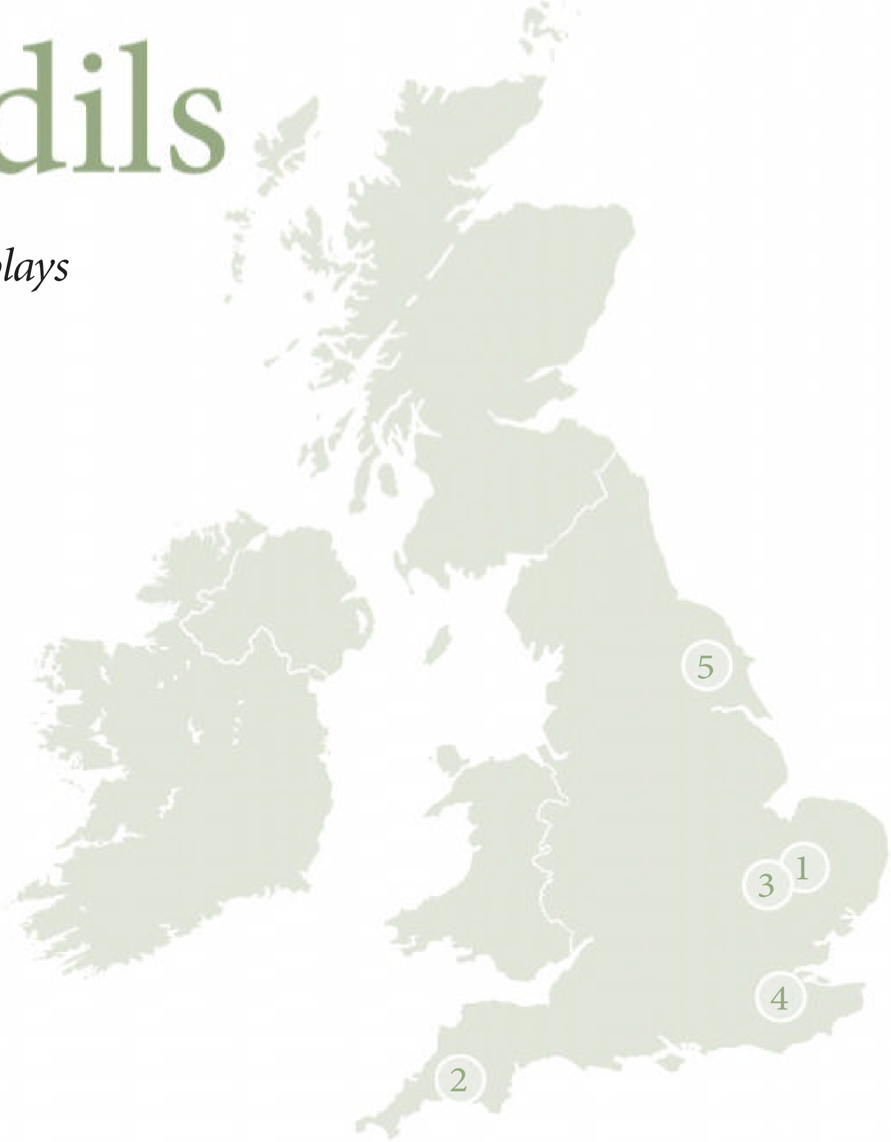

1 CHIPPENHAM PARK

A breath-taking display of snowdrops and aconites followed by a succession of hellebores, scillas, cyclamen, crocus, daphnes and viburnums and a crescendo of daffodils. Tearooms & Gardens open 8 February to 22 March and 6-9 April, 10am-4pm.

Ely, Cambs CB7 5PT | 01638 721416 | info@chippenhamparkevents.co.uk

Image: John Parker

2 COTEHELE, NATIONAL TRUST

You'll find glorious daffodils flowering at Cotehele from February through to May. The collection of 250 historic daffodil varieties is celebrated in a Daffodil Festival from 14-22 March, with displays, tours and floral sculptures. Tudor house, garden, Victorian mill, gallery and cafés open daily, 10am-5pm.

Nr Saltash, Cornwall PL12 6TA | 01579 351346 | nationaltrust.org.uk/cotehele

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3 DAFFODILS AT WIMPOLE

Throughout March and April the daffodils at Wimpole herald the start of spring. The favourite flower of Wimpole's last private owner, Elsie Bambridge, and planted in their thousands throughout the gardens. We've identified over 60 varieties and are still counting, with abundant swathes at every turn.

Royston, Cambridgeshire, SG8 0BW | nationaltrust.org.uk/wimpole-estate

4 HEVER CASTLE & GARDENS

Be dazzled by the bright sight of thousands of daffodils and find out more about the cheery spring bloom at this new event that includes free garden tours. Master daffodil grower Johnny Walkers, winner of 35 RHS gold medals, will be on site giving free talks and tours (16-20 March).

Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG | 01732 865224 | hevercastle.co.uk

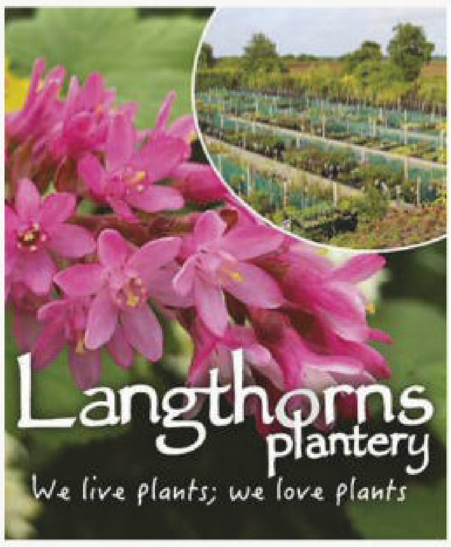
5 CASTLE HOWARD

Extensive woodland, temples, lakes and fountains. It's the time of year when the gardens are carpeted with beautiful yellow daffodils. Castle Howard is well known for its seasonal displays of daffodils, rhododendrons, bluebells and roses. As the gardens come to life, so too does the house as it reopens on Saturday 21 March 2020.

house@castlehoward.co.uk | 01653 648444

Spring Nursery Guide

Get inspired for the spring season with the best plant and bulb suppliers



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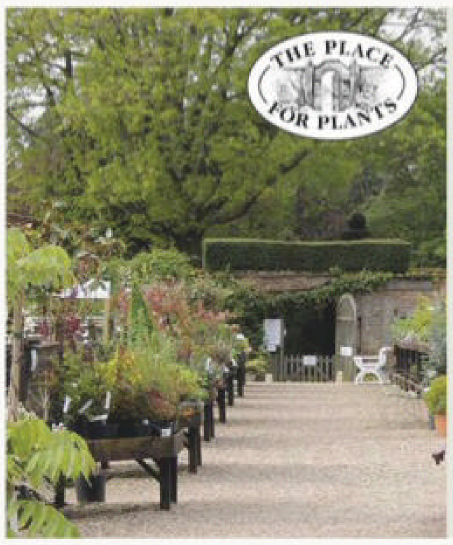

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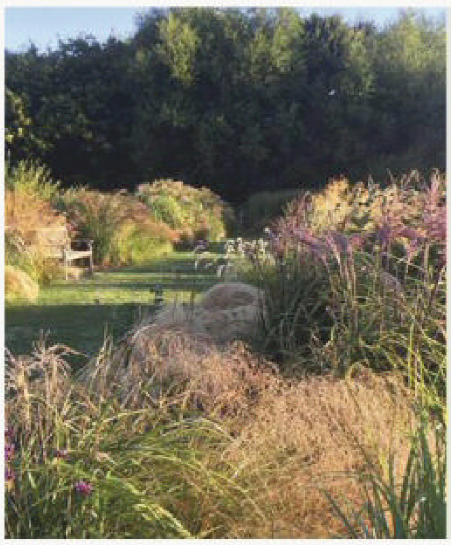

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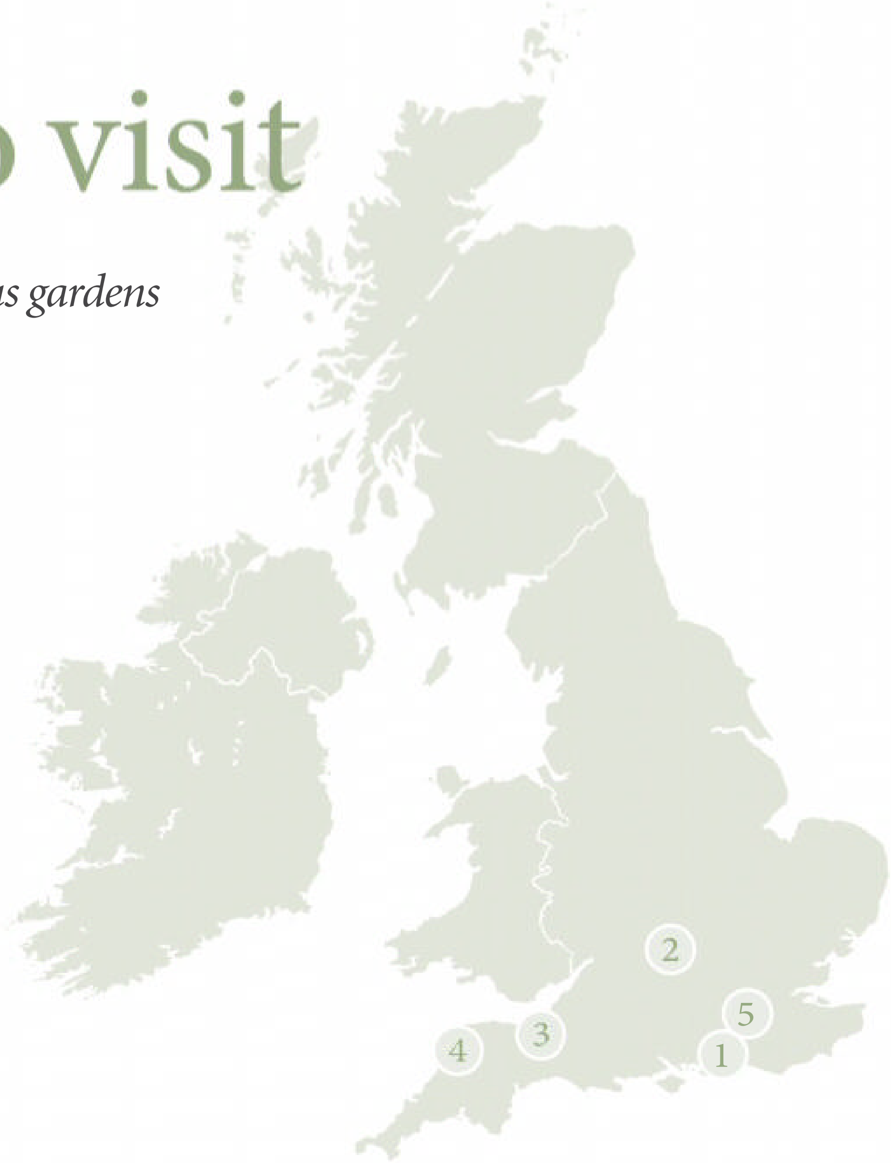
Spring Gardens to visit

As spring approaches, make time to visit this collection of glorious gardens



1 BLOOMING ARUNDEL CASTLE

Now anticipating its sixth year, the festival at the ancestral home of the Duke of Norfolk is set to be bigger than ever. The spectacular display will feature more than 80,000 tulips in 120 varieties across the Castle's 40 acres throughout April. Arundel Castle and Gardens re-opens on 1 April 2020.

Arundel, West Sussex BN18 9AB | arundelcastle.org

2 BUSCOT PARK

Buscot Park's 18th-century mansion offers art, gardens and lakes. Gardens open Monday to Friday 2pm-6pm and some weekends including Bank Holidays. Entry: House and Gardens: Adults: £12. Over 65s: £10. Children (5-15): £6. Information Line: 01367 240932. National Trust members free.

Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 8BU | info@buscot-park.com | buscotpark.com

3 HESTERCOMBE GARDENS

It is during spring that Lutyens' magnificent hard landscaping is most visible in the Formal Gardens, which he designed with Gertrude Jekyll. In the Georgian Landscape Garden, designed by Coplestone Warre Bampfylde c.1750s, swathes of beautiful snowdrops, daffodils and later, bluebells, punctuate the neo-classical vistas.

Taunton, Somerset TA2 8LQ | 01823 413923 | hestercombe.com

4 RHS ROSEMOOR

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Great Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH | 01805 626810 | rhs.org.uk/rosemoor

5 CHARTWELL

With blankets of daffodils and a meadow of crocuses and alliums, there's plenty to see at the family home of Sir Winston Churchill. The cut-flower bed has an array of tulips, magnolia trees frame the path towards the house while apple blossom bloom into life in the orchard.

Westerham, Kent TN16 1PS | 01732 868381 | nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell

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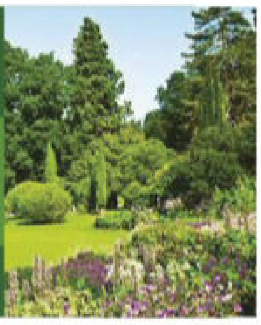

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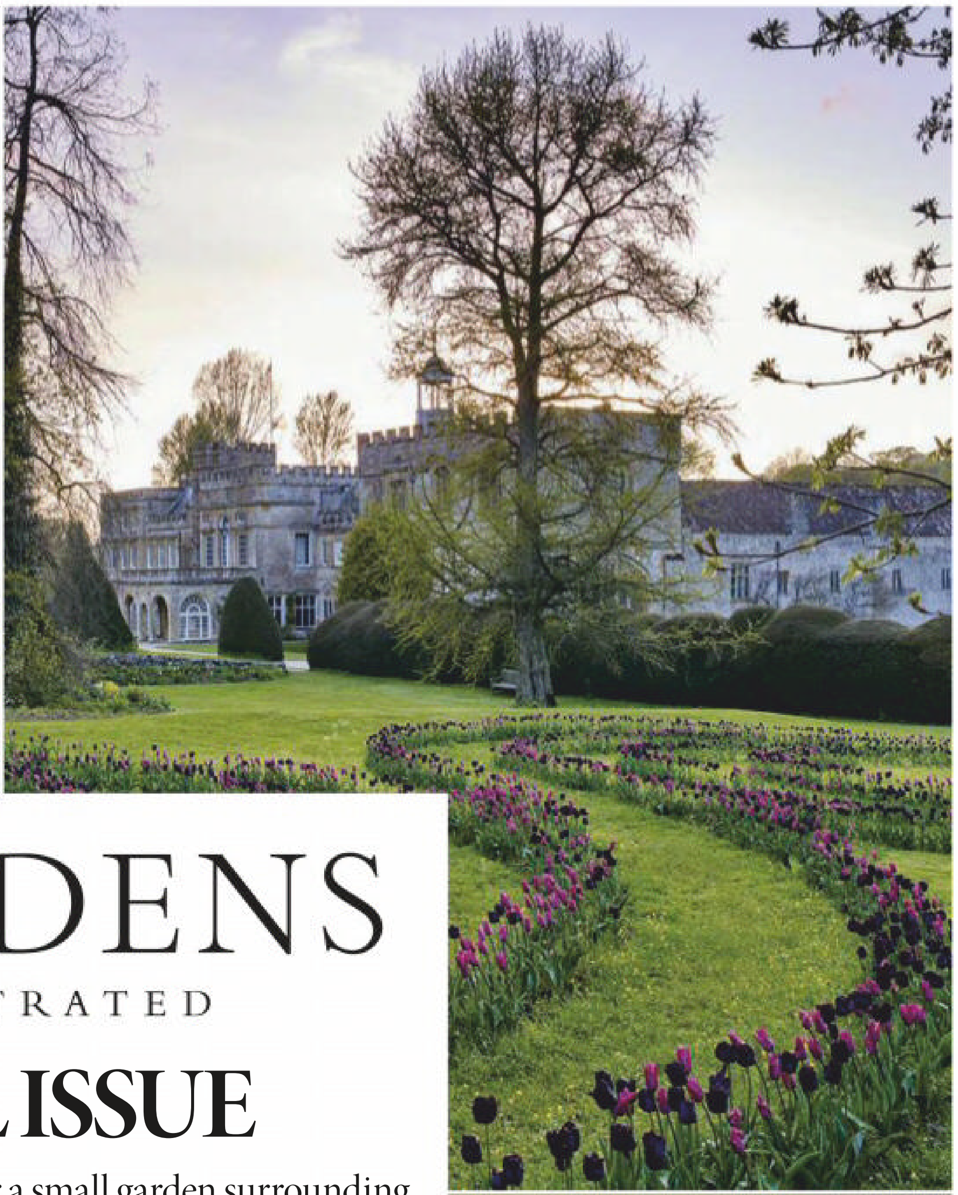

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- Take inspiration from the imaginative tulip displays at Forde Abbey in Somerset
- The best flowers and foliage for April colour
- Learn how to create stunning floral centrepieces combining container-grown plants with cut flowers
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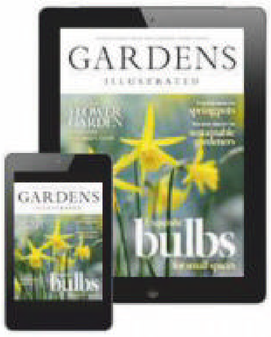

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HOUSEPLANTS

Coleus

A once-valued plant turning over a colourful new leaf

WORDS **JANE PERRONE** ILLUSTRATION **PATRICK MORGAN**

I recently made the mistake of telling my husband how much my variegated Swiss cheese plants could sell for. The bout of aroid fever gripping the houseplant world has placed these plants at a premium, I explained, meaning my pair of *Monstera deliciosa* 'Thai Constellation' would be a steal at around £150 each. Like any craze, it's about supply and demand: variegated monsteras are rare, so people will pay a princely sum to own one. *Coleus*, on the other hand, must rate as one of the cheapest ways to bring colour to your indoor display. There are hundreds of culitvars in every shade from the sublime to the ridiculous: lemon yellow, lime green, carmine pink, zesty orange and the inkiest purple-black (the flowers, an insignificant pale purple, should be removed on sight as they sap the plant's energy). And yet coleus had their own gold rush, too. I was fascinated to read in Dr Catherine Horwood's brilliant book *Potted Histories* that a dozen new coleus hybrids sold at auction by the RHS in 1868 went for £390 – quite a sum back then.

Over the years *Coleus* has been no stranger to taxonomic tussles. Until very recently you would have found most coleus described as *Plectranthus scutellarioides*. Now botanists are in agreement that *Coleus*, first discovered in Indonesia in 1790, and *Plectranthus,* first discovered in 1788, are related but distinct genera, and the plant previously known as *Coleus blumei* then *Solenostemon scutellarioides*, and now *Coleus scutellarioides*, is the parent of all the many variously coloured leaf cultivars. Its common name, the flame nettle, comes from its nettle-shaped leaves – not surprising as it is part of the Lamiaceae or deadnettle family.

There are two ways of getting hold of coleus – some cultivars are raised from cuttings, and tend to be sold as plug plants. These are generally slower to flower and set seed, and comprise the more choice cultivars, such as 'Saturn' with its lime-green leaves ringed with red, and 'Peter's Wonder', the leaves of which exhibit a crazy maze of red, yellow and green. A cheaper alternative is to buy seed to sow in early spring, although the resulting plants tend to be more varied. There are several widely available coleus seed mixes to test out, the most commonly available being Rainbow mix and Wizard mix. The Kong Series has enormous foliage the size of cabbage leaves, while the dwarf mix Fairway is suitable for those with narrow windowsills. Frustratingly, finding some of the more select cultivars in the UK as seed or plugs is not easy; US nurseries offer dozens of coleus with intriguing names, including splashy maroon and green 'Religious Rutabaga' and the magnificent magenta and purple 'Mariposa'.

Coleus are thirsty, hungry plants that will reward regular feeding and repotting with abundant growth: if you are accustomed to growing tomatoes, you'll find they like a similar regime. Indoors, light is crucial to their success. It is possible to enjoy coleus all year round, provided you can offer them a minimum of 10°C and a spot by a really large window, or supplement their needs with growlights during winter. Without the right conditions they become straggly, and even if you do treat them well, coleus are short-lived plants: they are regarded as annuals by those who prefer to keep them outside. As soon as my plants start to look dishevelled, I take copious cuttings, snipping stems just below a leaf node. Packed into a tall glass vase of water, the stems will continue to look pretty until they grow a mass of roots ready for potting up come spring.

Pinching out

Given their ten-a-penny nature of seed-grown stock, it's worth experimenting with different forms: coleus bonsai, standards and pyramid-shaped specimen plants are all achievable with judicious pinching out. And this is the key to controlling coleus, along with many other fast-growing houseplants. The shoot at the tip of the main stem releases auxin, a hormone that inhibits growth of the side shoots. Remove that leading shoot, and the levels of auxin drop so the plant compensates by sending out side shoots, resulting in a bushier shape. ☐

Jane Perrone is a garden writer

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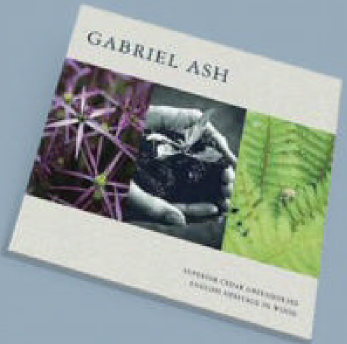
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